RICHARD WAGNER'S

THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG

THE COMPLETE GRAPHIC NOVEL

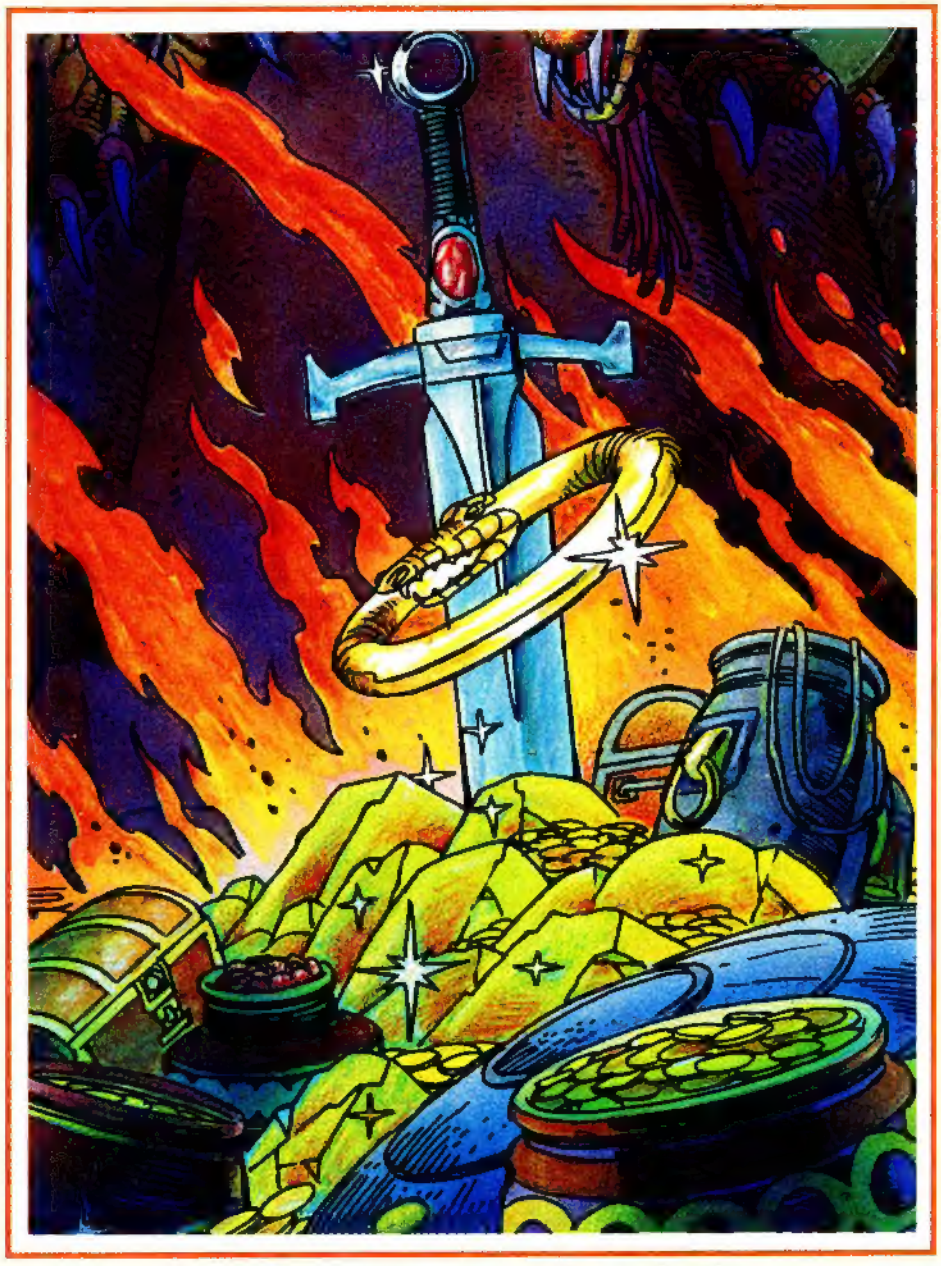
BY ROY THOMAS & GIL KANE

WITH JIM WOODRING

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

BRIAN KELLOW OF *OPERA NEWS*

Richard Wagner, 1813–1883



From the Ring of the Nibelung, book one. Illustration by Gil Kane.

RICHARD WAGNER'S

THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG

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THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG

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FOREWORD

by The Editors

Adapting Richard Wagner's four-opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen* into comic-book format was a double-edged undertaking, both natural and foolhardy.

Retelling great adventures, true or fictional, has long been a staple of sequential art. Ever since man has been having adventures he has recorded them in some kind of illustrated form, from cave walls to hieroglyphics to daily newspaper strips . . . in comic books.

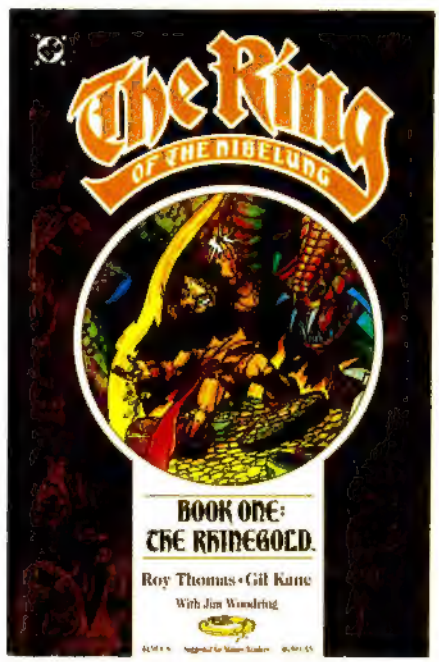
Operas had been rendered in comics before, but The Ring Cycle was a tall order—maybe the tallest. Brimming with images of heroes and gods, of dragons and magic, of love and battles, Wagner's tetralogy seemed the very essence upon which so much of comic books is based; however, the combined operas were close to sixteen hours long. If ever a tale could be termed "epic," it was this.

What's more, we obviously could not show the music. By adapting the operas themselves we would draw attention to that fact. Lost would be each overture, each "aria". Attempting to translate the inspiring majesty of "The Ride of the Valkyries" alone would seem reason enough to abandon the endeavor from the start. We wanted to do them justice and not merely be an annotated retelling.

It might have been easier to derive the stories from the original legends: the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Volsungasaga*, or from the *Elder Edda*, a selection of poems dated around 1300. Even this would have been, to mix mythical metaphors, a herculean task. For these Teutonic epos are not as lyrical as their Roman and Greek counterparts. They are disjunct, cumbersome, somewhat crude. Wagner, one might say, was the Homer that blended these Germanic odes into one concordant song.

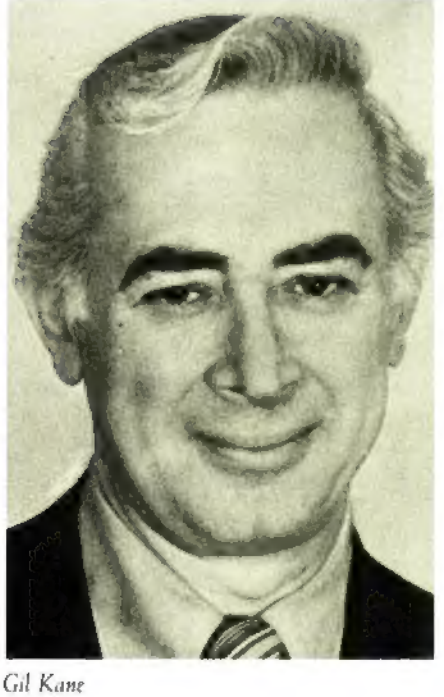
So why did we do it? We had two strong points in our favor: Roy Thomas and Gil Kane.

These gentlemen, comic-book professionals with nearly seventy-five years of experience between them, had long had it in their hearts to adapt The Ring. They had



From the Ring of the Nibelung, book one. Illustration by Gil Kane.

Roy Thomas



Gil Kane

both approached DC Comics. Roy and Gil had equal fondness for the material, as well as knowledge of the Icelandic myths—two different perspectives, both valid, both captivating. It is a tribute to these men that their cooperative melding of ideas has brought about this unique vision of the Volsung tale you hold in your hands. Just as the orchestra, set designers, director, and singers bring together the operatic tetralogy by Wagner on the stage, so did Roy, Gil, Jim Woodring, and John Costanza bring together this artistic accomplishment sure to be enjoyed by comic-book reader and opera-lover alike.

So, onward to the great double-edged adventure. We feel we have successfully overcome all the obstacles in the actual storytelling of Richard Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung. And if you feel moved to listen to the operas while partaking of this book, then we've even overcome the lack of music herein. However you read it, if your enjoyment is complete, our undertaking was a success.

About the creative team:

ROY THOMAS has written in every form of the comics medium ever since the mid sixties: super-heroes, western, horror and, most particularly, fantasy or sword-and-sorcery. With humble beginnings in comics fandom, creating and editing his own fanzines (comics fan magazines), he is best known for his adaptation of the works of Robert E. Howard, who created such characters as Conan the Barbarian and Red Sonja. With his fascination for period pieces, Thomas has also made his mark in revitalizing some of the heroes of the 1940s, including DC Comics' hero team The Justice Society. Thomas served well as both editor and editor-in-chief at Marvel Comics in the early 1970s, but never lost sight of his writing. Roy lives in California with his wife.

GIL KANE stands as a leader in graphic storytelling, a hallmark by which so many others can be measured. Beginning in the early 1940s, Kane worked for numerous companies through the years, until the so-called Silver Age of costumed super-heroes when he helped establish Green Lantern and The Atom for DC Comics, then National Periodical Publications. Kane continued at DC as well as Marvel Comics, including working on Conan with Roy

Thomas, Spider-Man, and many others. He has published his own comics, drawn newspaper strips, and has ever been a forerunner in his field. He has won several awards, not the least of which is the Reuben Goldberg Award for Outstanding Achievement in a Story Comic Book. Gil lives in California with his wife.

JIM WOODRING is a skilled painter and quite familiar with the comics medium. More than once he has gone the route of self-publishing, but his work has appeared in BUZZ, among other magazines. He wrote and drew his own magazine, entitled JIM, for Fantagraphics Books. He has also done a great deal of animation work. Jim lives in Seattle with his wife.

JOHN COSTANZA's list of accomplishments could easily fill the next ten pages, as he has lettered just about every DC comic around. His titles, word balloons, and sound effects add to the overall clarity and success of this book.

Jim Woodring

INTRODUCTION

by Brian Kellow
Managing Editor
of *Opera News*

Alberich steals Rhine Gold in 1869 engraving of Das Rhinegold *from a Theodor Pixis drawing . . .*

DC Comics' adaptation of Richard Wagner's monumental opera cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, may raise a few eyebrows—but should it? The Norse and Teutonic legends that Wagner took as his source material are chock full of dragons, gnomes, gods and goddesses: certified comic-book material. But Wagner's *music* is equally ripe material for DC's Gil Kane and Roy Thomas. Is any other composer's work as cinematic as Wagner's? From the sustained E-flat that signals the beginning of the world in *Das Rheingold* to the shattering final moments of *Götterdämmerung*, the *Ring* veritably swims with imagery; one not only hears the music, one *sees* it as well.

It is doubtful that any composer ever faced a more daunting task than Wagner, when, at age thirty-five, he set out to create *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Adapting the legends into a workable libretto was challenge enough, but Wagner also sought to redefine an entire art form. His previous operas, *Rienzi*, *Der Fliegende Holländer* (The Flying Dutchman), *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* had brought him considerable fame, but each owed something, in varying degreees, to the Italian opera tradition. Wagner longed to create an entirely new musical form beyond the boundaries of conventional opera. His new form, "music drama," would dispense with arias, duets and other set pieces that interrupted the flow of action. Instead, Wagner envisioned a continuous stream of fully integrated musical dialogue. He longed to create the kind of opera where every action, every word, every note would enhance the characterizations and advance the drama. Wagner possessed a fierce nationalistic streak, and wished to enhance his country's cultural profile, which had faded considerably by the mid-nineteenth century. His would be a purely *German* art form. He even envisioned a Wagner festival theater, set up to perform his works exclusively, presenting the finest German singers specially trained in the techniques of music drama.

Wagner found his source material in the ancient Teutonic and Norse sagas. Much of the *Ring* was forged from the *Nibelungenlied*, an early-thirteenth-century epic, and its Norse precursor, *The Edda*, dating from twelfth-century Iceland. *The Edda* contributed to the spirit of the *Ring* as well as to its structure, for it possesses one of the dominant traits of Norse mythology: the implacable presence of death. In this world, doom and destruction await man and god alike. According to the eminent scholar Edith Hamilton:

> The only sustaining support possible for the human spirit, the one pure unsullied good men can hope to attain, is heroism; and heroism depends on lost causes. The hero can prove what he is only by dying. The power of good is shown not by triumphantly conquering evil, but by continuing to resist evil while facing certain defeat. . . . The hero in one of the Norse stories who laughs aloud while his foes cut his heart out of his living flesh shows himself superior to his conquerors. He says to them, in effect, You can do nothing to me because I do not care what you do. They kill him, but he dies undefeated.

One of the most difficult tasks Wagner faced was whittling down the enormous number of characters and plot details. With remarkable economy and skill, he manipulated the myths to accommodate the demands of his music drama. For the most part, he remained true to the legends: the rainbow bridge appears in both legend and opera, and the Siegmund-Sieglinde episode from *Die Walküre* matches up well with the *Volsunga Saga*. Wotan, the god with mortal failings, is also an accurate reflection of the figure in legend. For Brünnhilde and her sister Valkyries, Wagner reached back beyond his literary sources. The Valkyries of Germanic history were warriors and conquerors, the full equals of men. Courage was the most highly prized quality in men and women alike. This was later softened in Nordic poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the Valkyries appeared as visions of death to the male warrior as he expired on the battlefield. These are the Valkyries of the *Nibelungenlied*, but Wagner chose to restore them to the warrior stature that was theirs by right of history.

. . . The Rhinemaidens from same 1869 engraving . . .

. . . which also depicted Fafner and Fasolt carrying Freia.

Sieglinde in Die Walkure *in this newspaper drawing by Knut Ekwall of 1876 Bayreuth production*

At the same time, Wagner was unafraid of taking liberties with the legends. In the original sources, the Nibelung's gold was not under the Rhine River but buried inside a cave; Siegmund and Sieglinde don't succumb to their forbidden passion but are brought together by Wotan's will. The loudest criticism of Wagner's handling of the myths stemmed from his tendency to strip characters of their nobility—notably Fricka, whom he characterizes less as a goddess defending the rules of the game than as a shrewish, vindictive hausfrau.

In the end, it would take Wagner twenty-six years, from 1848 until 1874, to complete the *Ring*. The librettos were written in reverse order. Originally he intended to write only a single opera, *Siegfrieds Tod* (The Death of Siegfried), which focused only on the hero's final days. When he set about composing the music in 1850, he realized that Siegfried's story needed to be placed in a broader context. The following year, he wrote the text for *Der Junge Siegfried* (Young Siegfried), which convinced him he would need to include the entire narrative. He eventually wrote the libretto of *Die Walkure* and finally of *Das Rheingold*. The music he composed in chronological order.

There were numerous interruptions. In May 1849 he participated in the ill-fated Dresden uprising, which was quelled within one week. Shortly before the Revolution began, an article of Wagner's appeared in a radical Dresden newspaper, calling for the abolition of the old, corrupt political order in Germany. "I will," he wrote, "destroy this order that divides mankind into hostile nations, into powerful and weak, into privileged and outlawed, into rich and poor, for it makes unhappy men of all. I will destroy this order of things that makes millions the slaves of a few, and makes these few the slaves of their own power, their own riches . . . and from the ruins of this old world may a new world arise, filled with undreamed happiness."

Perhaps Wagner was more fearful for his own future than for the future of Germany. The existing political order failed to provide a nurturing atmosphere for his artistic ambitions. Although Wagner never actively joined the fighting, his revolutionary fervor was widely enough known that a warrant was issued for his arrest, and he was forced to flee to Switzerland. He settled in Zurich, joined

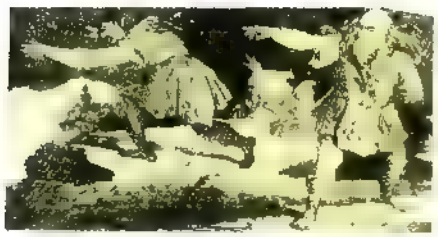
by his then wife, Minna Planer. He set to work writing essays on his theories, including his seminal work, *Opera and Drama* (1851), and composed the whole of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walkure*, as well as the first two acts of *Siegfried*.

He set aside work on *Siegfried* in 1857, primarily to concentrate on *Tristan und Isolde*, his passionate tribute to his new love, Mathilde Wesendonk, the wife of one of his benefactors. In 1864 he embarked on his long and convoluted relationship with Ludwig II, the eighteen-year-old King of Bavaria. Ludwig had nursed an obsession with Wagner's music ever since seeing *Lohengrin* three years earlier. When Wagner published his *Ring* texts in 1863, Ludwig proclaimed himself the composer's savior. He paid Wagner's debts and granted him free lodging, a yearly salary and the freedom to create.

Not, however, unconditional freedom. Wagner's arrangement with Ludwig meant that the king owned the *Ring* outright, and it was his wish that the cycle be performed in Munich. While the two men debated the issue, *Tristan und Isolde* had its premiere in Munich in 1865. Already Wagner had run afoul of Ludwig's cabinet, which was suspicious of his quest for a Wagner theater in Munich and, even more critically, of the potential scandal posed by his relationship with Cosima von Bulow.

Cosima was the wife of one of Wagner's disciples, the conductor Hans von Bulow, and the daughter of Wagner's longtime friend and champion, Franz Liszt. Their acquaintance, which began in 1853 when Wagner was forty and Cosima fifteen, blossomed into love in 1863, a mere six years after her marriage to Bulow. In 1864 the Bulows settled in Munich, where Wagner had arranged a court appointment for Bülow. But Ludwig soon became distressed by the nature of Cosima's relationship with Wagner (she already had born him two daughters, Isolde and Eva, while living under the same roof with Bulow). Ludwig's cabinet in turn resented the king's attention being focused on such personal affairs, particularly at a time when Bavaria was on the brink of entering the Austro-Prussian War. Wagner was again branded a troublemaker, and Ludwig requested that he leave Munich for several months. He returned to Switzerland, settling at Villa Triebschen near Lucerne, where in 1867 he completed *Die Meistersinger von*

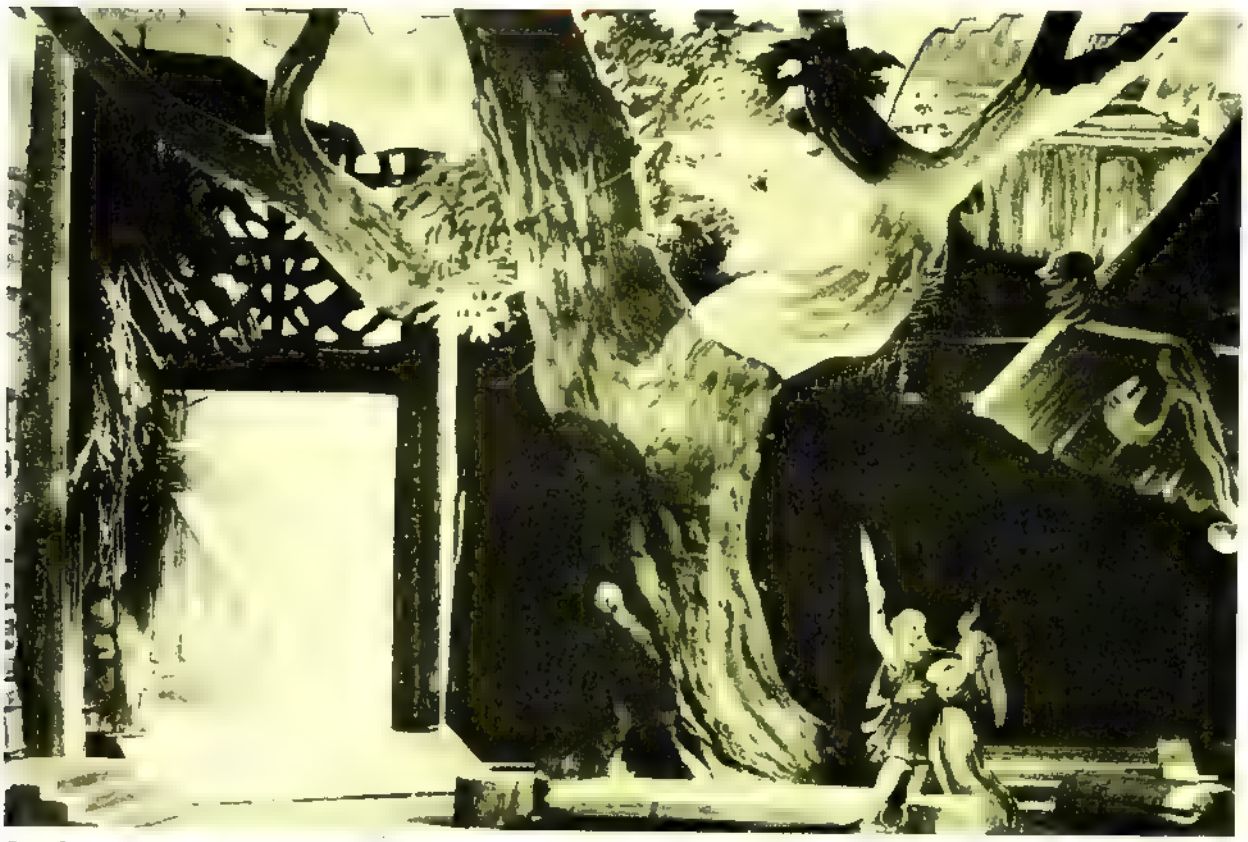
Wotan and Fricka, again from 1869 Das Rhinegold engraving of Theodor Pixis drawing



Mime and Alberich from same engraving

Nurnberg The following year Cosima, along with Isolde and Eva, joined him at Triebschen. A son, Siegfried, was born in 1869. In 1870, her divorce from Bülow at last final, Cosima and Wagner were married.

After six years, Wagner and Ludwig continued to debate the location of the *Rheingold* premiere. In the end, Ludwig won the battle but lost the war. *Rheingold* and *Die Walkure* were both staged in Munich in 1869–70, much to Wagner's dissatisfaction. For some time he had been skeptical about the future of German art and culture under Prussian rule, and he became increasingly convinced that the only way to present his works properly was to build a theater specifically designed for the task. Wagner sought, and initially failed to secure, Ludwig's patronage for the project. Many cities bid for the honor of housing Wagner's festival theater, but in the end the composer settled on a rather unremarkable Bavarian town called Bayreuth. The new theater's cornerstone was laid on May 22, 1872. Despite devastating lack of national support for the project, Wagner's fund-raising efforts were aided by the proliferation of Wagner Societies throughout Germany.



One of Joseph Hoffmann's models for Bayreuth, 1876—the first act of Die Walkure

Upon seeing the texts for the Ring Cycle, King Ludwig II of Bavaria became Wagner's main benefactor—but would remain so only as long as the king held all rights to the Operas

and Ludwig in the end came through with a sizable advance

On August 13, 1876, *Das Rheingold* opened the first season at Bayreuth. Prominent in the cast, as one of the Rhinemaidens, was Lilli Lehmann, who would one day graduate to Brunnhilde, thus securing her place in opera history. The festival closed that summer with a substantial deficit. It would be six years before another opera surfaced at Bayreuth (*Parsifal*, in 1882), and the *Ring* itself would not reappear until 1896. The composer's plans for a Bayreuth music school would never come to fruition. Still, in the summer of 1876, Wagner had triumphed.

The 1882 *Parsifal* was received ecstatically, and the Bayreuth festival became at long last a financial success. Wagner never lived to see his other works presented there. On February 13, 1883, on vacation in Venice, while at his desk, working on an essay, he suffered a fatal heart attack. Cosima proved a formidable keeper of the flame, supervising every facet of the festival's productions until 1908, when the reins were taken by her son, Siegfried. In 1930 she died at age ninety-two.

Although she would take certain liberties with future

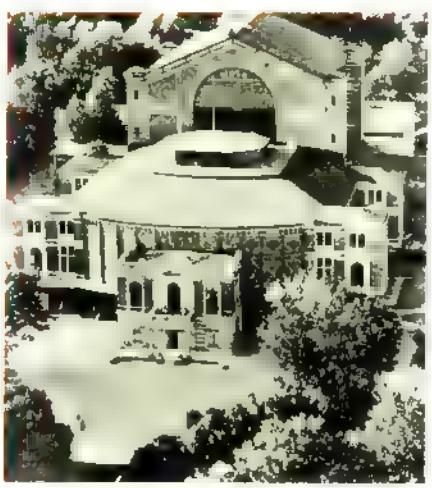
Rhinemaidens seemingly swam in mid air thanks to stagehands' magic, Bayreuth, 1876

productions of the *Ring*, Cosima remained true to Wagner's doggedly representational staging concepts. This posed all manner of practical difficulties. In the original 1876 *Rheingold*, the Rhinemaidens were held aloft on tall poles fastened to a stage truck, the poles moved up and down sliding the Rhinemaidens around like merry-go-round horses. Eventually, because the singers suffered from acrophobia as well as motion sickness, the task fell to members of the *corps de ballet*, with the singing done offstage. Not until the 1950s, when Wieland Wagner, the composer's grandson, took over the festival, was a less literal-minded approach adopted. The Valkyries no longer "rode", Fricka made her Act II entrance in *Die Walkure* minus her ram-drawn chariot, and Brünnhilde no longer had to engage in a battle of wills with her horse, Grane. Light and shadow were used to create all manner of effects. The principal stage setting became an exaggeratedly raked platform, the "Bayreuth disk," representing the universal rather than the specific. In recent years, as opera has increasingly become a director's medium, the *Ring* is often presented as a political or social allegory. In 1989, Deutsche Oper Berlin staged it in an underground time tunnel, inspired by Washington, D.C.'s subway system, complete with Valkyries in leather biker jackets and chains—a sort of Nordic miniskirt mob. But traditional productions—such as the Metropolitan Opera's current one, telecast in the spring of 1990—still abound.

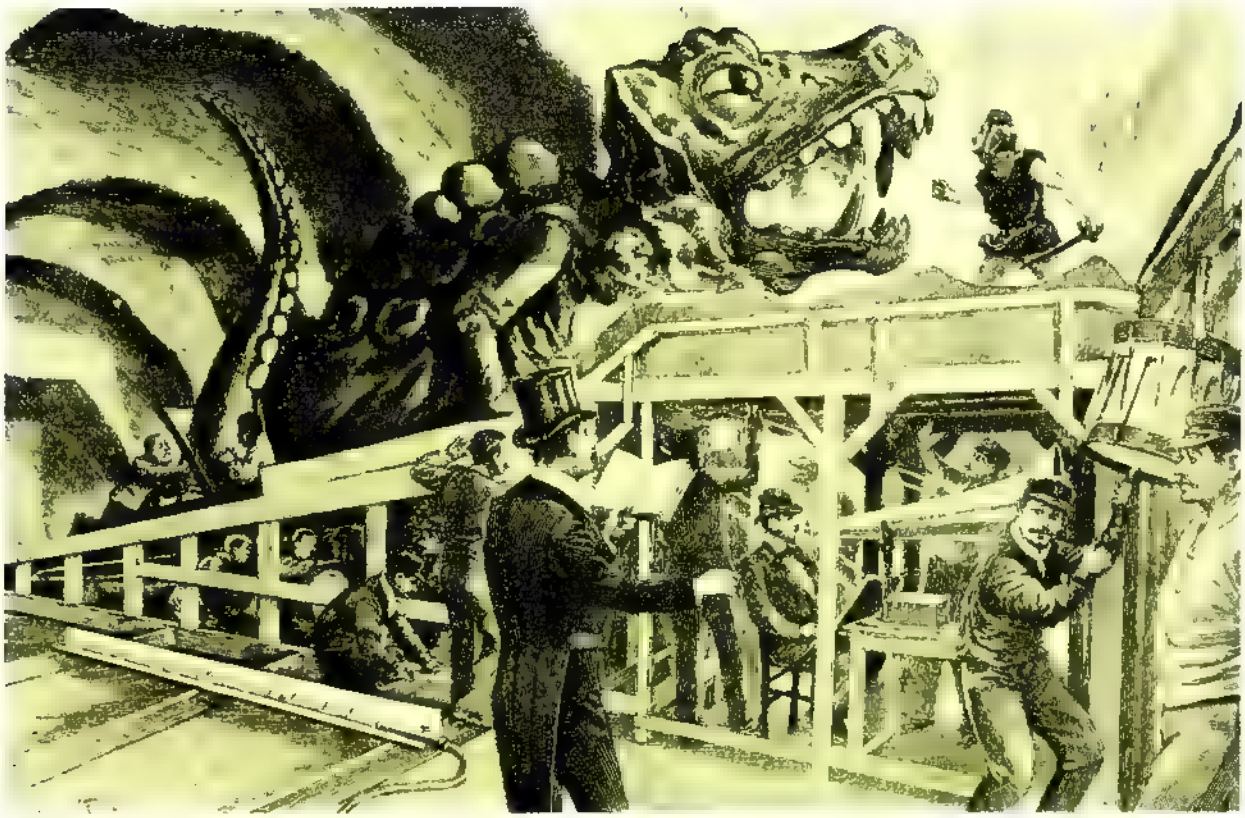
What would Wagner have thought of DC Comics' *The Ring of the Nibelung*? Since the original Bayreuth staging was never worked out to his satisfaction, perhaps he would have found Gil Kane's and Roy Thomas's pages liberating. Crucial flashbacks—most memorably, the stranger thrusting his sword into the ash tree at Sieglinde's and Hunding's wedding—impossible to show onstage, are worked out by Kane and Thomas with marvelous flair and detail. And the dragon is shown in all its ferocious majesty (probably Wagner would be especially pleased by this, for back in 1876 the dragon was manufactured in London and shipped to Bayreuth in sections, but the neck never arrived, having mistakenly been sent to *Beirut*).

Who knows? With the *Ring* now on television and in the comics, perhaps the door is open for Wagner's epic

Valkyrie costumes for the 1876 Bayreuth production by Carl Emil Doepler



The theatre in Bayreuth, Bavaria — where it all began



In 1902 Siegfried slays Fafner on a ramp as the dragon's vocal counterpart sings below the stage at the Paris Opera

cycle to reach a far wider audience than the composer could possibly have conceived of—via film. Perhaps we will yet see Steven Spielberg's vision of the *Ring*. Dream cast: Jason Robards as Wotan, Glenn Close as Fricka, Anjelica Huston as Brünnhilde, and as Siegfried—who else? Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Photos on page 8, 9, 11, top of 12, and top of 15 courtesy of Motley Books Ltd

Photos on page 10 and bottom of 12 courtesy of Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson Theater Collection

Photos on page 13, 14, bottom of 15, and 16 courtesy of Opera News Magazine

BOOK ONE

THE RHINEGOLD

ERDA, MEN CALL ME.
A SEERESS, WISE IN MAGIC, I SING THE BEGINNINGS OF ALL THINGS...
...AYE, AND I DO SING THEIR END.
THE BIRTHS OF GODS AND MEN... AND THEIR TWILIGHT DOOM, WHEN FLAMES SHALL CONSUME THEIR WORLD.
BEGINNINGS FIRST.

IN THE DAY-SPRING OF THE AGES, THERE WAS NEITHER SEA NOR SHORE, HEAVEN NOR EARTH, BUT ONLY A VAST, YAWNING ABYSS...
...BOUNDED ON THE ONE SIDE BY HEAT AND FLAME...
...ON THE OTHER BY FREEZING MISTS.
AS FIRE MET ICE, ABOVE THE VOID, WARMED DROPS OF MOISTURE BEGAN TO FALL INTO THE GAPING CHASM.
OVER TIME, THE DROPS QUICKENED, HARDENED...

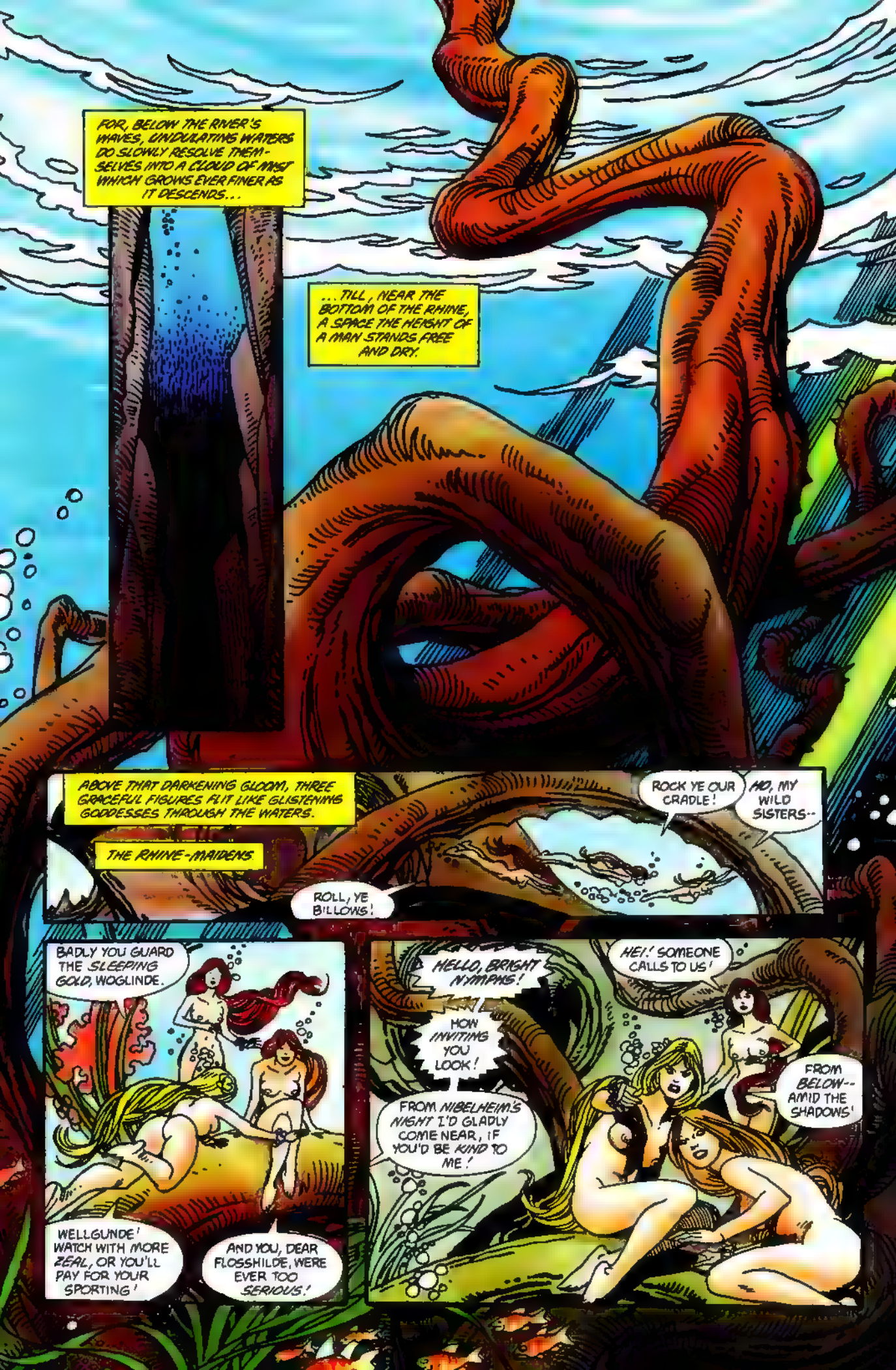
... AND A SHAPELESS MASS TOOK UNTO ITSELF FIRST FOOM...
...THEN LIFE.
YMIR.

FROM HIM, AND FROM THE LIVING VOID AUDHUMLA, WERE FORMED THE FROST GIANTS...
...THEN BORR, THE FIRST OF THE GODS.

IN WARS THAT RAGED ACROSS THE BIRTHING WORLD, THE SONS OF BORR, LED BY FIERCE-EYED WOTAN, SLEW ALL THE MISSHAPEN GIANTS...
...ALL, THAT IS, SAVE ONE, WHO ESCAPED WITH HIS FAMILY TO FOUND A NEW RACE, WHICH BORE THE ROISTERING GODS SCANT LOVE.

YMIR'S CORPSE THE TRIUMPHANT GODS DRAGGED INTO THE SPRAWLING ABYSS.
OF YMIR'S FLESH THE EARTH WAS FASHIONED.
OF HIS BONES, THE MOUNTAINS.
OF HIS HAIR, THE TREES.
FROM HIS SKULL, THE VAULT OF HEAVEN.
AND SEA AND RIVERS FROM HIS FREE-FLOWING BLOOD.

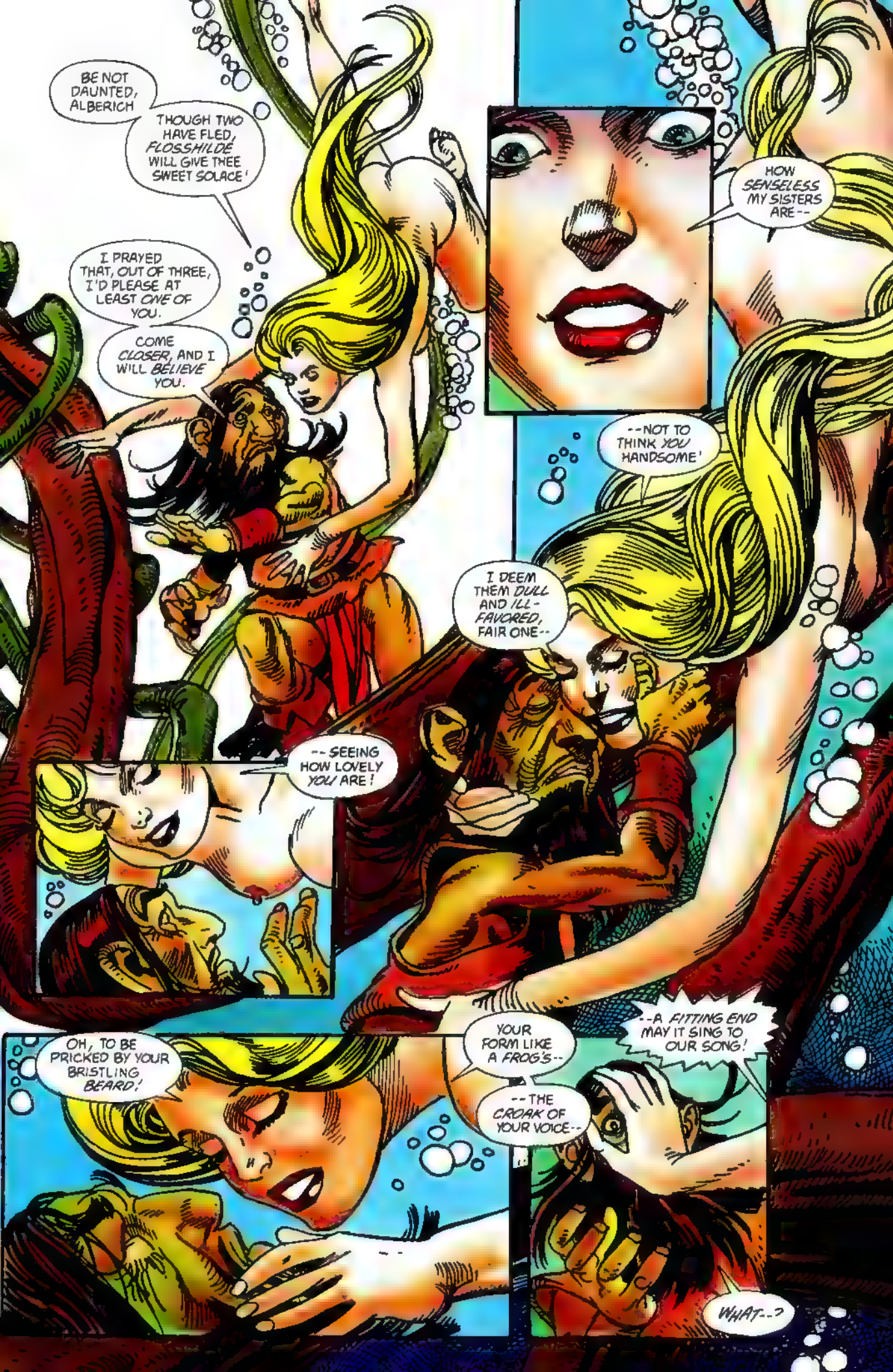
IN DAYS SOON AFTER WERE MAN AND WOMAN MADE, BY WODAN AND HIS BROTHERS HONER AND LODUR, FROM SPLINTERS OF WOOD THEY FOUND FLOATING UPON THE WATER.
FROM THIS PAIR ARE DESCENDED ALL THE HUMAN RACE, WHOSE NARRATION IS CALLED MANDSAGA.
THEN DID WODAN AND HIS NEW RACE OF GODS SET THEIR EYES UPON THE HEIGHTS, WHERE THEY WOULD RAISE A HALL OF THE VALIANT, TO WHICH THE BRAVEST OF HUMAN WARRIORS WOULD BE TAKEN WHEN SLAIN IN BATTLE.
AND TO THE RIVER RHINE, WHICH FLOWS GREEN AS EMERALDS TOWARD THE SEA THAT CIRCLES THE WORLD, WODAN CONSIGNED A HOARD OF GOLD WHOSE MAGIC EVEN HE COULD NEVER FULLY MASTER.
THUS ARE TIME'S BEGINNINGS AND ITS END INEXTRICABLY ENTWINED.


FOR, BELOW THE RIVER'S WAVES, UNDULATING WATERS DO SLOWLY RESOLVE THEMSELVES INTO A CLOUD OF MIST WHICH GROWS EVER FINER AS IT DESCENDS...
...TILL, NEAR THE BOTTOM OF THE RHINE, A SPACE THE HEIGHT OF A MAN STANDS FREE AND DRY.
ABOVE THAT DARKENING GLOOM, THREE GRACEFUL FIGURES FLIT LIKE GLISTENING GODDESSES THROUGH THE WATERS.
THE RHINE-MAIDENS
ROLL, YE BILLOWS!
ROCK YE OUR CRADLE!
HO, MY WILD SISTERS--
BADLY YOU GUARD THE SLEEPING GOLD, WOGLINDE.
WELLGUNDE! WATCH WITH MORE ZEAL, OR YOU'LL PAY FOR YOUR SPORTING!
AND YOU, DEAR FLOSSHILDE, WERE EVER TOO SERIOUS!
HELLO, BRIGHT NYMPHS!
HEI!' SOMEONE CALLS TO US!
HOW INVITING YOU LOOK!
FROM NIBELHEIM'S NIGHT I'D GLADLY COME NEAR, IF YOU'D BE KIND TO ME!
FROM BELOW-- AMID THE SHADOWS!

LET US SEE WHO SPIES ON US!
FIRST, LOOK TO THE GOLD!
FATHER WOTAN WARNED US OF SUCH A FOE!
HO, YOU UP THERE!
WHAT DO YOU WANT, DOWN THERE?
WHY? DO I SPOIL YOUR SPORT, STANDING HERE GAZING AT YOU?
DIVE YOU BUT DEEPER, THEN ALBERICH THE NIBELUNG WOULD JOIN IN YOUR FROLIC AND PLAY.
IS HE IN JEST?
THIS LOATHSOME DWARF WISHES TO JOIN US?
YOU GLEAM ABOVE ME -- SO FREE, SO FAIR!
IF ONE OF YOU, ONLY, WOULD GLIDE DOWN TO MY LONELY ARMS -- HOW FONDLY CLASPED SHE'D BE!
I LAUGH AT THE FEARS I FELT, SISTERS.
THE "FOE" IS BUT SMITTEN!
CLIMB UP TO ME, AMOROUS IMP!

I--I'M TRYING, ADORABLE CHILD-- BUT IT'S SO SLIPPERY--SO DAMP--SO--
-WA-SHEEWN!-
HAHAHAHA HIS SNEEZING TELLS ME THAT MY SUITOR COMES!
WAIT FOR ME, LOVELY MERMAIDEN!
ON SECOND THOUGHT--
--I THINK IT IS FAR BETTER UP HERE!
COME BACK, FALSE ONE!
OH, HOW DO I CAPTURE SUCH COY, ELUSIVE FISH?
HEIA, BELOVED ONE!
FORGET WOGLINDE! SHE WAS EVER FAITHLESS...

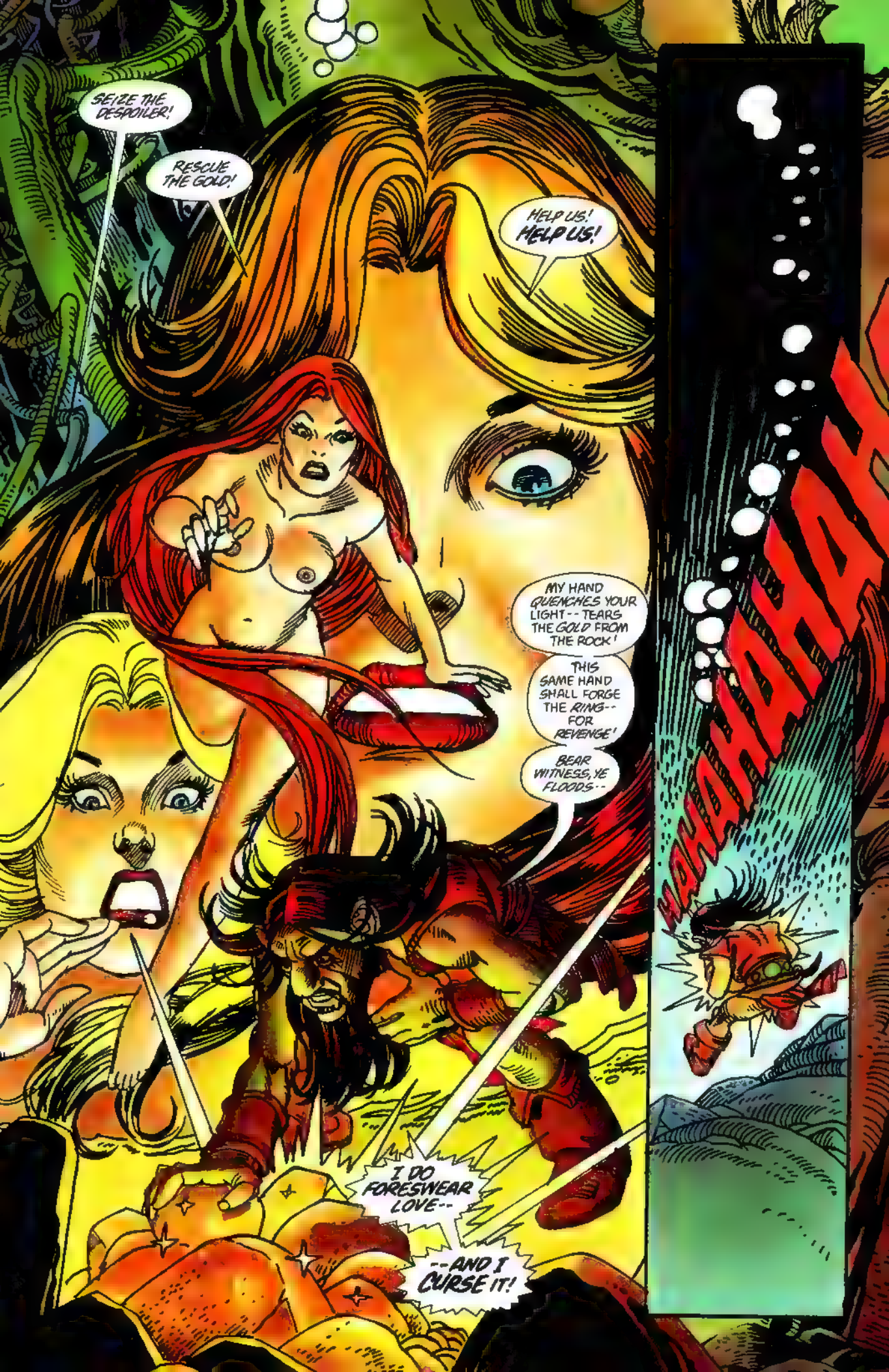
COME TO ME, INSTEAD!
COME TO YOUR LOVING WELLGUNDE!
YOU-- ARE EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN SHE! BUT-- YOU ARE SO FAR AWAY...
IS IT FOR LOVE THAT YOU HUNGER, DWARF?
YES...
YES!
THEN GO FIND IT, YOU SWARTHY ROGUE-- FROM SOMEONE OTHER THAN I!
HAHAHAHA

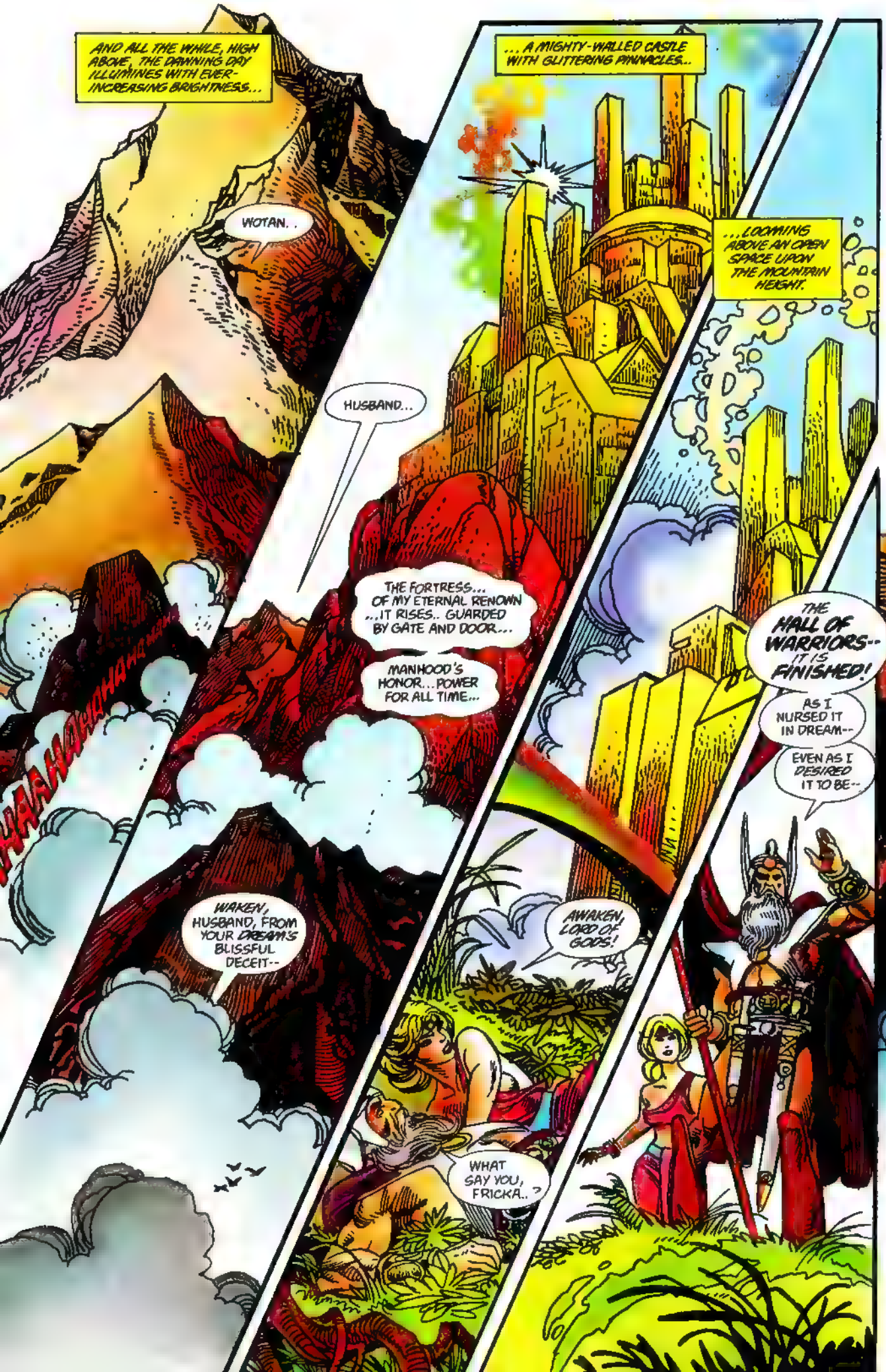

BE NOT DAUNTED, ALBERICH
THOUGH TWO HAVE FLED, FLOSSHILDE WILL GIVE THEE SWEET SOLACE!
I PRAYED THAT, OUT OF THREE, I'D PLEASE AT LEAST ONE OF YOU.
COME CLOSER, AND I WILL BELIEVE YOU.
HOW SENSELESS MY SISTERS ARE--
--NOT TO THINK YOU HANDSOME!
I DEEM THEM DULL AND ILL-FAVORED, FAIR ONE--
--SEEING HOW LOVELY YOU ARE!
OH, TO BE PRICKED BY YOUR BRISTLING BEARD!
YOUR FORM LIKE A FROG'S--
--THE CROAK OF YOUR VOICE--
--A FITTING END MAY IT SING TO OUR SONG!
WHAT--?

AHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
YOU SLY AND SHAMEFUL, YOU WORTHLESS AND DISSOLUTE WANTONS!
DO YOU LIVE ON LIES ALONE?
AH, HOW THE TWIN FIRES OF PASSION AND FURY RAGE WITHIN ME-- LASHING ME TO FRENZY!
ONE OF YOU, AT LEAST, MUST YIELD TO MY YEARNING--
ONE OF YOU MUST FEEL MY LUSTING GRASP!
EH?

WHAT'S THAT WHICH YONDER GLEAMS AND GLISTENS?
LOOK, SISTERS!
THE SUN ABOVE HAS WAKENED THE BEAUTIFUL SLEEPER IN THE DEPTHS!
WHERE DO YOU HAIL FROM, CHURL--
--THAT YOU'VE NOT HEARD OF THE RHINEGOLD?
GOLD?
IS THIS ANOTHER OF YOUR LYING GAMES?
YOU'D NOT SCORN THE GOLD, IF YOU BUT KNEW ALL ITS WONDERS!
AYE! FOR A RING FASHIONED FROM THE RHINEGOLD WOULD GIVE THE WEARER MEASURELESS POWER--
--POWER TO WIN THE WEALTH OF ALL THE WORLD!
A...RING...?

HUSH, YOU CHATTERERS! FATHER BADE US GUARD THE HOARD FROM THIEVES LIKE THIS!
WHY WORRY? YOU KNOW THAT ONE MAN ALONE CAN EVER HOPE TO SHAPE THAT TREASURE.
ONLY HE WHO FORSWEARS THE POWER AND JOY OF LOVE CAN ATTAIN THE MAGIC THAT MAKES A RING OF THE GOLD!
THEN WE ARE SAFE, FOR NO ONE WOULD LIVE WITHOUT LOVING--
--LEAST OF ALL THAT PITIFUL GNOME, INFLAMED WITH DEMONIC LUST!
I COULD TRULY... GAIN THE WHOLE EARTH'S RICHES?
THEN, EVEN IF LOVE WERE DENIED ME-- I COULD STILL WIN PLEASURE!
MOCK ON, YOU WATER-BORN BROOD--
ALBERICH THE NIBELUNG MAKES FOR YOUR TOY!
SAVE YOURSELVES!
LOVE HAS DRIVEN THE DARK ELF MAD!


SEIZE THE DESPOILER!
RESCUE THE GOLD!
HELP US! HELP US!
MY HAND QUENCHES YOUR LIGHT -- TEARS THE GOLD FROM THE ROCK!
THIS SAME HAND SHALL FORGE THE RING -- FOR REVENGE!
BEAR WITNESS, YE FLOODS --
I DO FORESWEAR LOVE --
-- AND I CURSE IT!
HAHAHAHAH


AND ALL THE WHILE, HIGH ABOVE, THE DAWNING DAY ILLUMINES WITH EVER-INCREASING BRIGHTNESS...
WOTAN..
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA
WAKEN, HUSBAND, FROM YOUR DREAM'S BLISSFUL DECEIT--
HUSBAND...
THE FORTRESS... OF MY ETERNAL RENOWN ...IT RISES.. GUARDED BY GATE AND DOOR...
MANHOOD'S HONOR... POWER FOR ALL TIME...
WHAT SAY YOU, FRICKA..?
...A MIGHTY-WALLED CASTLE WITH GLITTERING PINNACLES..
AWAKEN, LORD OF GODS!
...LOOMING ABOVE AN OPEN SPACE UPON THE MOUNTAIN HEIGHT.
THE HALL OF WARRIORS-- IT IS FINISHED!
AS I NURSED IT IN DREAM--
EVEN AS I DESIRED IT TO BE--

--THE GODS' OWN ABODE PROUDLY REARS ITS RADIANT TOWERS!
STRONG IT STANDS, AND FAIR TO BEHOLD--
-BRAVE AND BEAUTIFUL VALHALLA!
AYE, YOU NOW HAVE YOUR STRONGHOLD-- WHILE I TREMBLE WITH FEAR FOR MY SISTER FREIA!
OR DO YOU FORGET THE PRICE YOU PROMISED TO THOSE WHO BUILT IT?
NO--NOR THAT YOU LIKEWISE CRAVED SUCH A CASTLE!
I CRAVED HIGH STATELY WALLS-- TO KEEP YOU BESIDE ME WHEN YOUR STRAYING FANCY TEMPTED YOU TO ROAM.
BUT YOU DESIGNED IT WITH ONLY WAR AND BATTLE IN MIND--
WHEN WOOING YOU, FRICKA, DID I NOT STAKE UNGRUDGINGLY EVEN ONE OF MY EYES?
WOMEN I PRIZE MORE THAN YOU LIKE - AND TO ABANDON FREIA WAS NEVER MY INTENT
THEN SHIELD HER NOW, HUSBAND--
--AND PLEDGED MY GOLD-HAIRED SISTER TO THOSE WHO REARED IT!
--FOR SHE FLEES THIS WAY!
WOTAN! SISTER! HELP ME!
FASOLT AND FAFNER COME-- TO BEAR ME OFF, THEIR CAPTIVE!

LET THEM COME!
ER... HAVE YOU SEEN LOGE?
WHY DO YOU SEEK THAT TRICKSTER?
IT WAS HIS ADVICE THAT BROUGHT THIS MISERY DOWN UPON OUR HEADS!
WHERE HONEST COURAGE MAY SUFFICE, WOTAN ASKS NEITHER GOD NOR MAN FOR AID.
BUT WHAT IS NEEDFUL HERE IS CRAFT AND CUNNING SUCH AS LOGE WIELDS.
HE WAS SWORN TO FIND A RANSOM FOR FREIA -- AND ON HIM MY FAITH IS FIXED!
WHERE IS HE, THEN? I SEE THE GIANTS COMING -- BUT NOT LOGE!
AND WHERE LINGER MY BROTHERS -- MY LAST BEST HOPE?
DONNER -- HELP ME!
FROH! RESCUE YOUR FREIA!
HAIL, WOTAN!
WHILE YOU GODS SLEPT, WE TWO TOILED SLEEPLESS, WITH UNTIRING EFFORT.
YONDER STANDS WHAT WE RAISED -- YOUR STRONG-WALLED FORTRESS
YOU RAISED IT WELL, FASOLT.
WHAT PAYMENT WILL APPEASE YOU BOTH?
HAVE YOU SO SOON FORGOTTEN?
OUR PRICE WAS THE FAIR FREIA!
FROM THIS DAY FORTH, SHE DWELLS WITH US!
WHAT?
HAVE YOU GONE MAD?

ASK SOME OTHER WAGE, AND I SHALL PAY IT READILY
BUT THE GODDESS FREIA IS NOT FOR SELLING!
O TRUSTING FOOL OF A BROTHER -- NOW DO YOU SEE HIS TRICKERY?
BEWARE, CHIEF OF GODS!
AS WE LET OURSELVES BE BOUND BY YOU TO PEACE AND LABOR -- SO LIKEWISE ARE YOU BOUND TO YOUR BARGAIN --
-- BY WORDS SWORN UPON YOUR SACRED RUNESPEAR!
HOW SLY OF YOU GIANTS, TO JUDGE US SERIOUS WHEN PLAINLY WE WERE BUT JESTING!
THIS BEAUTIFUL GODDESS -- WHAT CHARM COULD SHE POSSIBLY HAVE FOR SUCH LOUTS AS YOU?
UNJUSTLY YOU JEER AT US!
YOU PLEDGED US FREIA'S LOVE -- THE PRICE FOR HEAVING UP YOUR TOWERS OF STONE.
WE DOLTS -- WE GREAT HULKING DULLARDS -- STROVE WITH CALLOUSED HANDS, SO THAT A WINSOME WOMAN MIGHT THEN SOJOURN IN OUR MIDST --
-- AND NOW YOU CALL THAT PACT A JEST?
WE SHALL GET NO GAIN FROM WORDS, FASOLT!

FREIA'S CHARMS MEAN LITTLE TO US-- BUT IT MEANS MUCH, IF FROM YOU GODS WE REMOVE HER!
GOLDEN APPLES RIPEN IN HER GARDEN, BY HER HAND ALONE.
YOU, HER KINFOLK, EAT OF THEM-- AND THEY ENDOW YOU WITH YOUTH EVER-LASTING.
LOGE-- WHY DO YOU NOT COME?
IF WE TAKE FREIA-- YOU'LL SWIFTLY AGE, AND WASTE TO NOTHING!
AYE! SO GAVE US YOUR ANSWER, WOTAN!
ASK SOME OTHER WAGE!
NO OTHER! FREIA FOLLOWS US, OR--
DONNER! FROH! SAVE ME FROM THESE BEASTS!
KRRAKKOOM
BACK, OVERBOLD ONES!
FROH'S SWORD SHIELDS HIS FAIR SISTER!
WE DESIRE NO STRIFE, YOU GODS
BUT WE WANT OUR DUE REWARD!
OFT HAS DONNER DOLED OUT GIANTS THEIR DUE!
COME! MY STORM-HAMMER WILL PAY YOUR REWARD IN FULL MEASURE!

HOLD, YOU FIERCE ONES -- NOTHING BY FORCE!
ALL BONDS AND TREATIES, WOTAN'S RUNE-SPEAR PROTECTS!
THE GIRL, THEN, COMES WITH US -- BY YOUR OWN RECKONING!
NO! SURELY THAT CANNOT BE YOUR THOUGHT, HUSBAND!
THEN HOPE IS LOST -- IF THE ALL-FATHER FORSAKES ME!
WELL, WOTAN?
WHICH IS IT TO BE?
IT...
IT IS...
--LOGE!
HE COMES--

--AND NOT BE YOUR HASTE, GODLING, TO SETTLE THIS EVIL BARGAIN YOU MADE!
WHAT BARGAIN IS THIS FOR WHICH LOGE IS BLAMED, WOTAN?
THE ONE WITH THESE GIANTS, THAT YOU YOURSELF DID DECIDE?
YOU SLYLY EVADE THE POINT, LOGE -- AND THUS BETRAY YOUR ONLY FRIEND AMONG THE GODS.
WHEN THESE TWO FIRST DEMANDED FREIA AS THEIR WAGE, I GAVE WAY--
--ONLY WHEN YOU SOLEMNLY SWORE TO REDEEM THAT NOBLE PLEDGE!
TO PONDER WAYS TO REDEEM HER-- THAT PROMISE DID I GIVE, AYE.
BUT TO DISCOVER WHAT CANNOT BE-- WHAT NONE CAN DO--
--HOW COULD SUCH A THING AS THAT BE PROMISED?

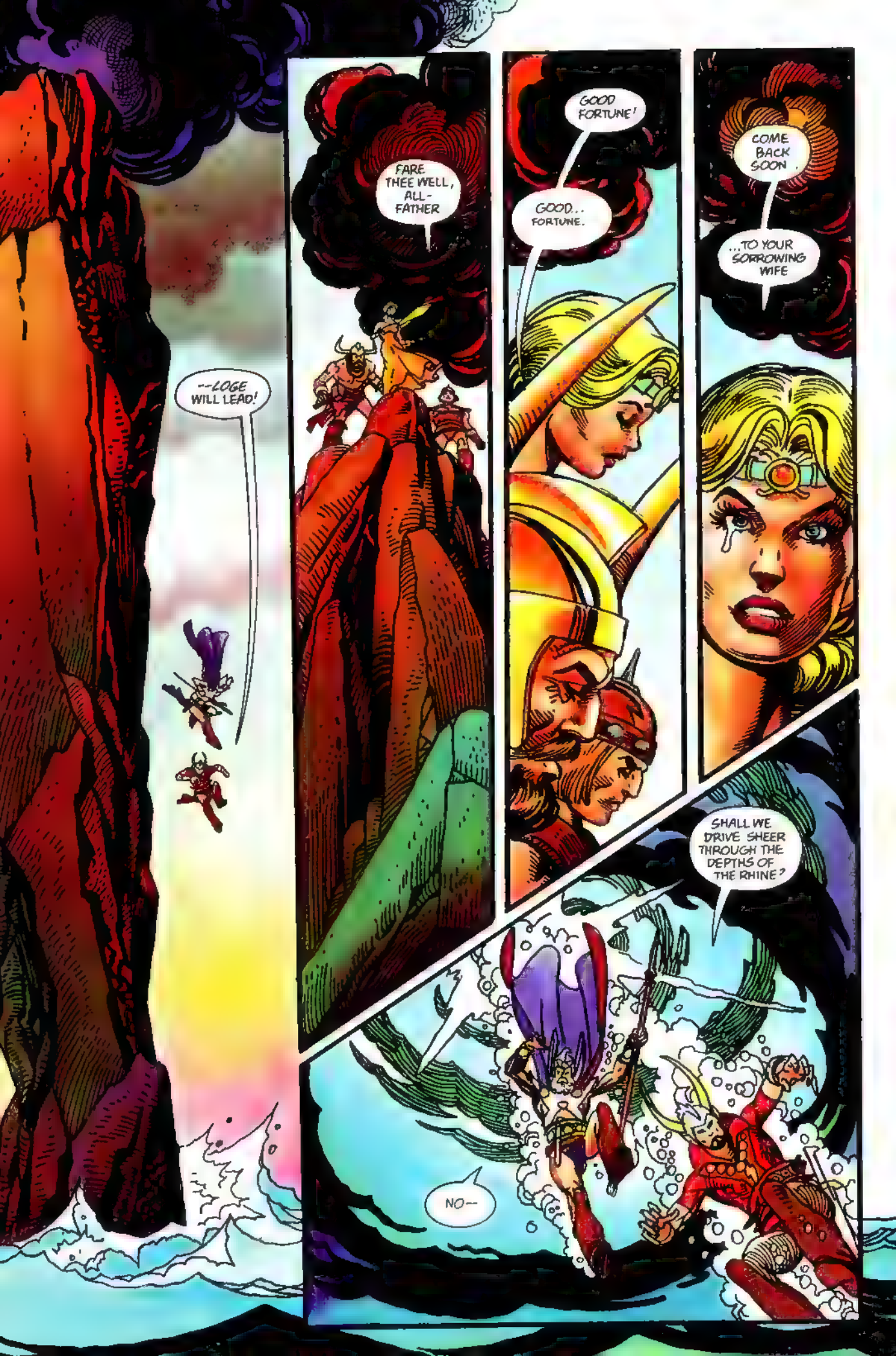
SEE THE TREACHEROUS ROGUE YOU TRUSTED, HUSBAND?
EVEN BEFORE THE GIANTS' SKULLS WILL LOGE'S BE SHATTERED!
YOU SCHEMERS HAVE STALLED US LONG ENOUGH!
NOW WE TAKE WHAT WE WANT!
LOGE-- FAIL ME NOT!
STILL WITH REPROACH IS LOGE PAID!
CONCERNED BUT FOR YOU, WOTAN, I RANSACKED THE EARTH'S FOUR ENDS TO FIND A RANSOM FOR FREIA!
AND WHAT COULD YOU HAVE FOUND, THAT WE WOULD TAKE IN PLACE OF A WOMAN'S DELIGHT?
WHEREVER I WANDERED, MY SEARCH MET WITH LAUGHTER AND SCORN, TRUE.
IN WATER, EARTH, AND AIR, I MET NONE WHO WOULD FOREGO LOVE AND WOMANKIND--
--SAVE ONE, ONLY!
THE SORROWING RHINEMAIDS TOLD ME HOW THE NIBELUNG, DARK ALBERICH, RENOUNCED ALL POWER AND HOPE OF LOVE--
--AND ROBBED THE TREASURE THEY LONG HAD GUARDED!

THE RHINEGOLD-- STOLEN?
AYE! THE MAIDENS BADE ME BEG YOU TO CRUSH THE THIEF, AND RESTORE THEIR GOLD TO THEM
WHAT? IN PERIL MYSELF, HOW CAN I HELP OTHERS?
THAT ACCURSED NIBELUNG! MUCH TROUBLE HAS HE EVER CAUSED US GIANTS!
BUT SUCH IS HIS CRAFT AND CUNNING, HE HAS NEVER BEEN CAUGHT!
SURELY HE IS PLANNING OTHER MALICE!
TELL US THE TRUTH, FIRE-GOD! WHAT WONDEROUS GIFT HAS THIS GOLD, THAT ALBERICH DESIRES IT SO?
IN THE WAVES, IT WAS BUT THE MERMAIDS' PLAYTHING.
BUT THE DWARF HAS FORGED IT INTO A MAGICAL RING--
--WITH WHICH HE HOPES FOR POWER TO WIN THE WORLD!
HE COULD FORGE THE RING-- BECAUSE HE HAD FORESWORN LOVE?
NO LESS! ALREADY HE LORDS IT OVER THE DWARVES OF NIBELHEIM, FAR BELOW, GAINING MORE TREASURE
WORTH FAR MORE THAN FREIA IS THIS GLITTERING GOLD, FASOLT!

THIS TRINKET FORGED FROM THE GOLD--
COULD IT BE WORN BY A WOMAN, AS WELL?
THE WIFE WHO WORE IT, FRICKA, WOULD NEVER LOSE HER HUSBAND'S LOVE
FOOLISH FEMALE! THAT RING MUST BE MINE, NO ONE ELSE'S!
BUT HOW TO CAPTURE IT--?
WHAT A THIEF DID STEAL--
- STEAL THOU FROM THE THIEF!
THE RING CAN NOW BE WON WITHOUT RENOUNCING ALL LOVE!
WOTAN! FAFNER AND I WILL TAKE PALTRIER PAYMENT THAN FREIA FOR OUR WORK.
WE WILL TAKE -- THE NIBELUNG'S GOLD!
YOU ARE MAD!
HOW CAN I PAY YOU WHAT I DO NOT POSSESS?
THAT IS YOUR ANSWER?
THEN FREIA COMES WITH US!
NO!
SAVE ME, YOU GODS!

AND WOULD YOU FOREGO THE NIBELUNG TREASURE--FOR THE SAKE OF A WOMAN'S SHALLOW CHARMS?
WHAT OTHER CHOICE DOES WOTAN LEAVE US?
IT IS NOT FREIA YOU TRULY WANT NOW--BUT THE GOLD--
--THAT GLEAMING HOARD WHICH ALBERICH HAS AMASSED, BY THE SLAVE LABOR OF THE DWARVES--
--AND OF WHICH WOTAN AND I SHALL SOON RELIEVE HIM.
DO IT, THEN!
LET US GO, BROTHER!
WE SHALL RETURN WITH FREIA WHEN EVENING FALLS
BUT IF THE GOLD BE NOT READY FOR US THEN--

--SHE WILL BE OURS--
--FOREVER!
SISTER! BROTHERS!
HELP ME!
THEY ARE GONE--AND YOU DID NOTHING!
DONNER AND FROH FEEL SUDDENLY WEAKENED--AS DO I.
LOOK AT YOUR SELVES, AND LEARN WHY!
YOU'VE NOT PARTAKEN TODAY OF FREIA'S APPLES--NOR CAN YOU NOW
THUS, ALREADY YOU BEGIN TO AGE--JUST AS THE GIANTS INTENDED
MY LOSS IS LIGHTER, FOR SHE WAS EVER STINTING WITH ME
BUT YOU GODS STAKED ALL UPON THE FRUIT THAT KEEPS YOU YOUNG, AND NOW--
LOGE SPEAKS TRUTH!
EVEN MY HAMMER HAS FALLEN FROM MY HAND
SEE WHAT YOUR SCHEMING HAS BROUGHT US TO?
UP, LOGE! WE MUST GO!
YOU OTHERS WAIT TILL NIGHTFALL, HERE FOR THE RANSOM THAT WILL MAKE US YOUNG AGAIN
TO NIBELHEIM, HASTENING DOWNWARD, I GO IN SEARCH OF THE GOLD!
WHERE WOTAN GOES--


--LOGE WILL LEAD!
FARE THEE WELL, ALL-FATHER
GOOD FORTUNE!
GOOD... FORTUNE.
COME BACK SOON.
...TO YOUR SORROWING WIFE
SHALL WE DRIVE SHEER THROUGH THE DEPTHS OF THE RHINE?
NO--

--NOT THROUGH THE RHINE!
THEN LET US SWING DOWN, TOGETHER-
--THROUGH THIS SULPHUROUS CLEFT!
ARE WE THERE, ALREADY?
AYE

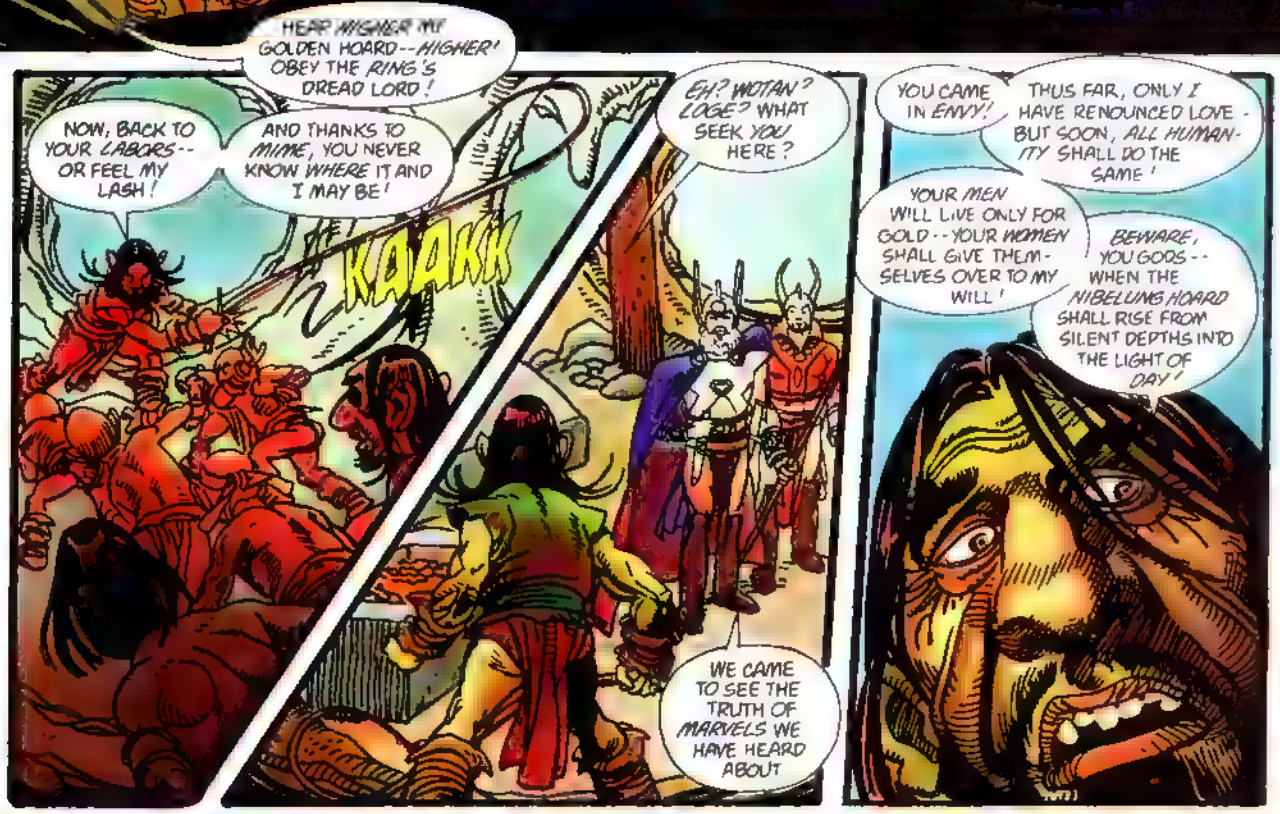
SEE YOU HOW BRIGHT FIERY SPARKS GLEAM YONDER, THROUGH DALE MISTS?
HEAR YOU THAT EVER INCREASING CLAMOR--THE CLANG OF PICKS, OF HAMMERS ON ANVILS?
KLINK KLANK KLINK KLANK KLINK
THAT IS THE PLACE WE SEEK
KLANGK
KLANGK
KLANGK
--THE SUBTERRANEAN KINGDOM ALREADY CONQUERED BY THE RING-POWER OF EVIL ALBERICH!

MIME!
COME HERE, MISCHIEVOUS DWARF!
OWW! L-LET ME ALONE!
KRAKK
I'LL PINCH YOU PRETTILY, IS WHAT I'LL DO-- IF YOU'VE NOT FINISHED MAKING THE THING I DESIRE!
OWWCH! IT--IT IS FORGED!
TAKE YOUR NAILS FROM MY EAR!
DONE?
THEN WHY THIS DELAY IN SHOWING YOUR HANDIWORK, GOOD MIME?
I FEARED SOMETHING MIGHT STILL BE NOT QUITE AS YOU WOULD HAVE IT, SO I--
H-HERE, ALBERICH..
WHERE IS IT??
"NIGHT AND DARKNESS--
RASCAL! YOU SOUGHT TO TRICK ME, AND KEEP THE TARNHELM FOR YOURSELF!
AH! THE HELMET FITS THE HEAD--
--BUT WILL THE SPELL NOW WORK, AS WELL?

"--GEEN OF NONE!"
BROTHER-- CAN YOU SEE ME?
WH-WHERE ARE YOU?
I SEE NO ONE!
YEEOWW
THEN FEEL ME, INSTEAD!
TAKE THAT FOR YOUR THIEVISH THOUGHTS!
KIKK!
HAHAHAHA I THANK YOU, BLOCKHEAD!
YOUR WORK HAS STOOD THE TEST!
WAH
BOK
THAK
STOP-- OH, PLEASE--
--STOP!
NOW ALL NIBELUNGS MUST WORK HARDER-- AND HARDER STILL!
WHERE ALBERICH CANNOT BE SPIED--

-- THERE LOOK OUT FOR HIS COMING!
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA
HAIL, DWARF!
WHO BEATS AND BULLIES YOU SO?
L-LEAVE ME IN PEACE, I P-PRAY YOU!
WE WILL DO BETTER THAN THAT
WE HAVE COME TO HELP YOU
WHO CAN HELP MIME, WHOSE OWN BROTHER BEATS HIM LIKE A SLAVE?
AND WHO ARE YOU, STRANGERS, THAT COME ASKING ME QUESTIONS?
FRIENDS, MIME
FRIENDS WHO FROM THEIR SHACKLES WILL FREE ALL YOU NIBELUNG FOLK.
BUT WHO--?
MARK! HAVE A CARE.

KRAAK
ALBERICH COMES!


HEAR HIGHER MY GOLDEN HOARD--HIGHER! OBEY THE RING'S DREAD LORD!
NOW, BACK TO YOUR LABORS--OR FEEL MY LASH!
AND THANKS TO MIME, YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE IT AND I MAY BE!
KAAKK
EH? WOTAN? LOGE? WHAT SEEK YOU HERE?
WE CAME TO SEE THE TRUTH OF MARVELS WE HAVE HEARD ABOUT
YOU CAME IN ENVY!
THUS FAR, ONLY I HAVE RENOUNCED LOVE - BUT SOON, ALL HUMANITY SHALL DO THE SAME!
YOUR MEN WILL LIVE ONLY FOR GOLD--YOUR WOMEN SHALL GIVE THEMSELVES OVER TO MY WILL!
BEWARE, YOU GODS--WHEN THE NIBELUNG HOARD SHALL RISE FROM SILENT DEPTHS INTO THE LIGHT OF DAY!

ENOUGH, IMPIOUS FOOL!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
WOTAN MEANS--WHO WOULD NOT GAZE IN WONDER, BEHOLDING ALBERICH'S EMPIRE?
BUT WHAT SURPRISES ME MOST IS HOW FEARFUL THE DWARVES SEEMED, OF THAT GOLDEN RING UPON YOUR FINGER
IF IT IS THE SOURCE OF YOUR POWER OVER THEM, ARE YOU NOT WORRIED SOME THIEF WILL STEAL IT WHILE YOU SLEEP?

MOST SHREWD SEEMS LOGE--AT LEAST TO HIMSELF!
YOU GODS WHO LIVE ON LOFTY HEIGHTS, SOON EVEN YOU SHALL BE GRIPPED BY A FIST OF GOLD!
FOR WONDERS BEYOND WONDER WILL I PERFORM BY MEANS OF THIS RING--
--AND WIN THE WORLD FOR MY OWN!
AS FOR SOMEONE STEALING THE RING-- WHY, THIS HELMET CAN MAKE MYSELF, AND IT, INVISIBLE
AND MORE-- I NOW CAN ASSUME ANY SHAPE THAT I FANCY
TILL THAT IS PROVED, I MUST DOUBT YOUR WORDS
I WILL SHOW YOU-- THAT YOU MAY DIE OF YOUR ENVY
"WREATHE THOU AND WRIGGLE--
"--DRAGON DREAD!"

AHAHAHAHA
S-SPARE THE LIFE OF P-POOR LOGE, TERRIBLE DRAGON!
YOU ARE CONVINCED?
NOTHING SIMPLER, DULLARD! WATCH!
"CREEP AND CRAWL THERE--
YES, BUT--CAN YOU ALSO TURN INTO SOMETHING TINY, TO SLIP AWAY FROM YOUR FOES--
-OR IS THAT, AS I SUSPECT, BEYOND EVEN YOUR POWERS?
-CROOKED TOAD!"
YOU DID--
--VERY WELL!
CRONNK
I--I AM CAUGHT!
MY CURSE--UPON YOU BOTH!
NOW SWIFTLY UP..

FROM THESE PEAKS, ALBERICH, YOU CAN GAZE DOWN AT THE WORLD THAT WAS YOURS FOR THE WINNING
PRAY, WHAT CORNER WILL YOU GIVE TO ME FOR MY STALL?
KNAVES! ROBBERS! FREE ME - OR YOU SHALL ANSWER DEARLY FOR THIS OUTRAGE
A RANSOM ALONE SHALL LOOSE YOU FROM BONDAGE.
. . THEN HE IS OURS!
I WARN YOU FEARFUL REVENGE SHALL FOLLOW THIS WRONG!
PACK OF UNSCRUPULOUS THIEVES!
WELL? WILL YOU YIELD UP THE TREASURE?
I WILL SUMMON IT HERE
VAIN TALK IS THIS OF REVENGE, BEFORE EVEN YOUR FREEDOM IS WON
IF VENGEANCE YOU DREAM, THEN DREAM OF YOUR RANSOM FIRST-- WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY!
DECLARE THEN YOUR DEMANDS
THE TREASURE HOARD MINED BY YOUR NIBELUNG THRALLS!
YET IF ONLY I CAN KEEP THE RING, THE HOARD I CAN LIGHTLY LET GO--
FOR I COULD WIN IT ANEW, BY THE RING'S MAGIC!

...WHEN YOU BUT LOOSEN MY HANDS.
BY SECRET COMMAND, THE NIBELUNGS ARE CALLED TO HIS PLACE.
ALREADY I CAN HEAR THEM COMING.
...THERE! THE PRICE IS PAID--NOW LET ME DEPART!
AND MY HELMET--GIVE THAT TO ME, ALSO!
NAY! THE PLUNDER MUST PAY FOR THE PARDON!
ACCURSED THIEF!
PATIENCE, NIBELUNG! HE WHO MOLDED THAT HELM CAN MOLD ME ANOTHER!
ALBERICH NOW OWNS NOTHING AT ALL
UNBIND, YOU TYRANTS, HIS BONDS!
OUGHT I TO FREE HIM, WOTAN?
ARE YOU NOW CONTENT?
A GOLDEN RING CIRCLES YOUR FINGER, GNOME..

THAT, TOO, BELONGS UPON THE PILE!
THE .. RING..?
MY LIFE, IF YOU MUST-- BUT NOT THE RING!
THE RING I COVET
FOR YOUR LIFE, I CARE NOT AT ALL
HAND AND HEAD--EYE AND EAR--
--NONE ARE MINE MORE TRULY THAN IS THIS RING!
YIELD ME THE RING!
IMPUDENT ROGUE! DID THE RHINE'S FAIR DAUGHTERS GIVE YOU THE GOLD FROM WHICH THIS RING WAS MADE?
NOW I AM THE MOST WRETCHED OF CREATURES!
BUT TAKE CARE, ARROGANT GOD! MY SIN WAS ONE CONCERNING MYSELF ALONE--
--BUT IN TAKING THE RING, YOU WANTONLY SIN AGAINST ALL THAT WAS, IS, OR EVEN SHALL BE!
I NOW OWN WHAT MAKES ME SUPREME-- THE MIGHTIEST LORD OF ALL LORDS!
SLIP AWAY HOME, ALBERICH, FOR NO CHAINS BIND YOU.
YOU ARE FREE.
TAKE THEN MY FREEDOM'S FIRST GREETING, FOR IT IS THINE!
A CURSE GAVE ME THE RING--AND MY CURSE NOW GOES WITH THE RING!

AS ITS GOLD GAVE MEASURELESS POWER, MAY NOW ITS MAGIC DEAL DEATH EVERMORE!
WRACKED WITH WORRY SHALL BE HE WHO OWNS IT--GNAWED BY ENVY, HE WHO DOES NOT!
ALL SHALL COVET IT--YET NONE SHALL PROFIT BY IT
--FOR FROM ALBERICH'S CURSE, NONE SHALL ESCAPE!
DID YOU HEED HIS FOND FAREWELL?
HE WAS BUT VENTING HIS FURY
THE RING'S PROUD LORD SHALL BE ITS POOREST SLAVE--
--TILL ONCE AGAIN I HAVE IN MY HAND THE GOLD I WAS ROBBED OF!
SO DOES THE NIBELUNG BLESS THE RING, IN BITTER DESPAIR!
HOLD FAST TO IT--GUARD IT WELL--
WOTAN! LOGE! YOU HAVE RETURNED!
GREETINGS, SIRE!
DO YOU BRING GOOD TIDINGS?
BY FRAUD AND BY FORCE, WE HAVE PREVAILED.
BEHOLD--FREIA'S RANSOM!
LOOK! IN THE GIANTS' GRASP, THE FAIR ONE APPROACHES!
AND WITH HER--OUR YOUTH EVERLASTING!

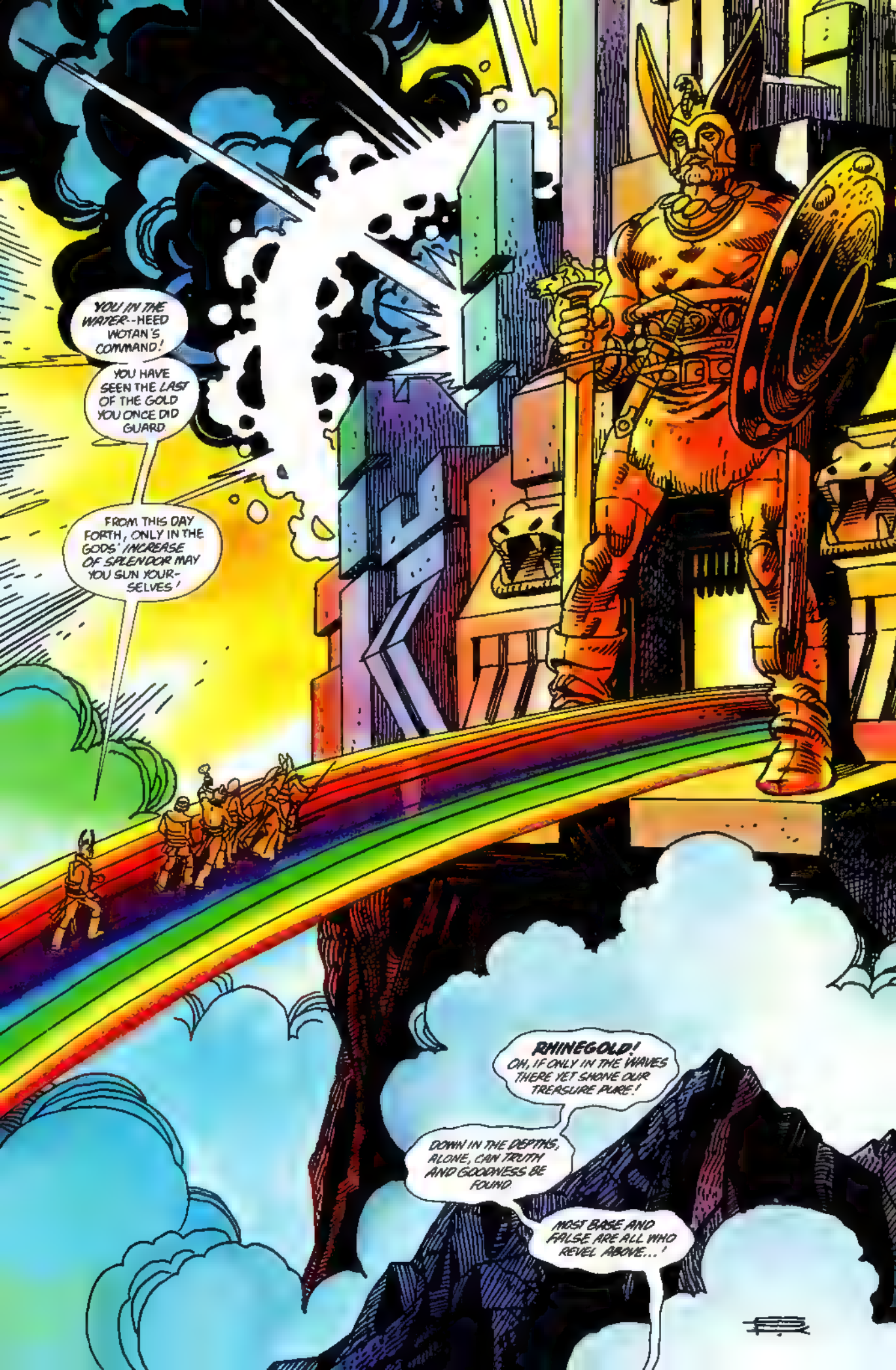
O SWEETEST OF SISTERS--!
HOLD! TOUCH HER NOT YET!
IT IS ONLY WITH DEEP REGRET THAT I HAVE BROUGHT HER BACK--IN CASE YOU GODS CAN REDEEM HER
IN TRUTH, IT GRIEVES ME GREATLY TO LOSE THE WOMAN...
HERE LIES THE RANSOM
INDEED, SO THAT MY HEART MAY FORGET HER, YOU MUST PILE UP THE TREASURE--
--HEAVE IT SO TALL IT HIDES THE BLOSSOM-SWEET MAID FROM MY EYES!
LET FREIA'S FORM, THEN, BE THE GAUGE OF THE GOLD!
AND OUR STAVES SHALL GIVE HER MEASURE.
THUS HIGH, NOW, HEAP YOU THE HOARD!
AND IN SO DOING, WE END FREIA'S DIS-HONOR!

NO! LET THE PILE BE MORE TIGHTLY PACKED!
I CAN STILL SEE THE GODDESS THROUGH THE CRANNIES
COME! THIS GAP MUST BE CLOSED!
DO YOU WANT TO MEASURE, FAFNER?
THEN MEASURE YOUR STRENGTH AGAINST MINE--!
CALM YOURSELF! I THINK SHE IS FINALLY HIDDEN.
NAY! HER GOLDEN HAIR STILL SHINES THROUGH!
BUT THE HOARD IS SPENT
THAT THING YONDER - THROW IT ON THE PILE!
EVEN
THE TARNHELM..?
MAKE HASTE, OR ELSE--
LET IT GO, ALSO
AT LAST WE HAVE FINISHED
HAVE YOU NOW ENOUGH, GIANTS?
HOLD! HER EYES BEAM LIKE STARS UPON ME THROUGH THAT SINGLE CHINK!
WHILE I BEHOLD THOSE SWEET, SAD EYES, HOW CAN I EVER PART FROM HER?
AND ON WOTAN'S FINGER STILL GLEAMS A GOLDEN RING!
LET THAT CLOSE UP THE CREVICE!

WHAT? GIVE UP MY RING?
NEVER!
THE RING MUST GO WITH THE RANSOM
- OR FREIA COMES WITH US!
HEARTLESS GOD GIVE IT TO THEM!
LET ME ALONE! I HOLD TO THE RING!
BUT WAIT! WHO COMES-
- IN FLAMES THAT ISSUE FROM OUT OF THE VERY ROCK?
WOTAN-- YIELD THE RING!
FLEE ITS DREAD CURSE - AND YOUR OWN DOOM!
WHAT WOMAN IS THIS, WHO FORE-TELLS SUCH WOE?
ALL THINGS THAT WERE, ERDA KNOWS--AND THINGS THAT ARE, AND THAT SHALL BE
HEARKEN, WOTAN! ALL THINGS SHALL SHORTLY END - AND FOR THE GODS, DARK DAYS ARE DAWNING!
BE COUNSELED! KEEP NOT THE RING!
STAY, EARTH-MOTHER! TELL ME FURTHER!
YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED, WOTAN
WEIGH MY WORDS - WITH FEAR!
SHE IS... GONE
HERE, YOU GIANTS--
--TAKE YOU THE RING!

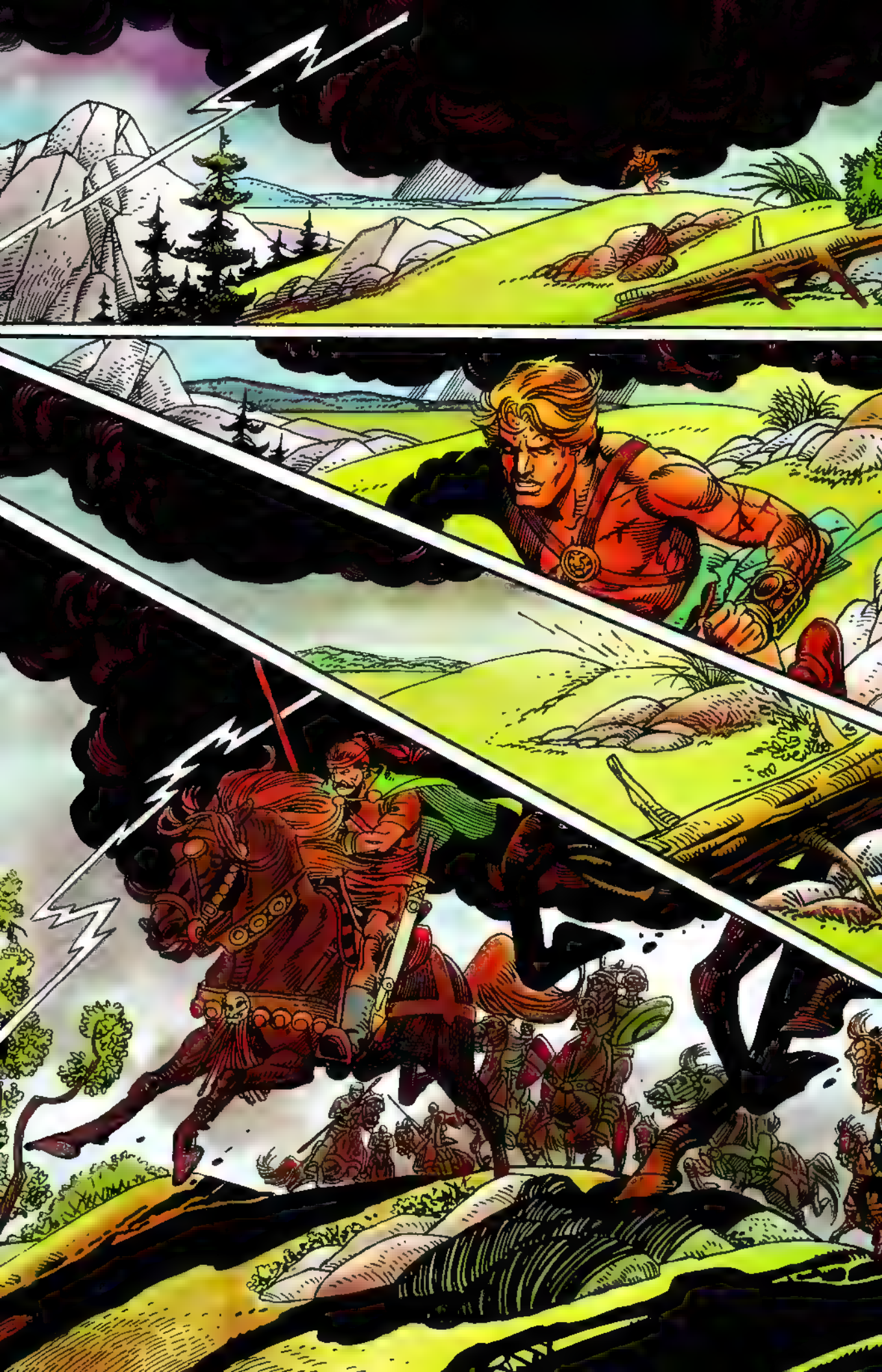
TO ME, FREIA! YOU ARE..
..FREE
MORE ON THE MAID THAN ON THE GOLD WERE YOUR EYES SET, BROTHER
THUS IT IS ONLY FIT THAT MOST OF THE GOLD BE MINE!
LET HIM HAVE THE HOARD, FASOLT.
HOLD ON TO WHAT MATTERS -- THE RING!
HE'S RIGHT!
STAY BACK, FAFNER! MINE IS THE RING!
I LOST FOR IT FREIA'S SMILE!
NO!
THE RING IS MINE!
KRAKK
NOW, BROTHER--
--FEAST YOU ONLY UPON FREIA'S SMILE--
THUK
--FOR NO MORE SHALL YOU EVER TOUCH THE RING!

DREAD INDEED, IT SEEMS, IS THE CURSE'S MIGHT!
GREAT WAS YOUR GAIN, WOTAN, IN GAINING THE RING--
--BUT THE GAIN OF ITS LOSS IS GREATER STILL!
GRIM FOREBODINGS OPPRESS MY SOUL--
--AND ONLY ANCIENT ERDA CAN TELL ME HOW TO END THEM!
WITH WAGE ACCURSED WAS THEIR COST PAID!
MY HAMMER WILL SWEEP AWAY THE MIST THAT OBSCURES THOSE RAMPARTS.
BUT MEANWHILE-- DO NOT THE STATELY WALLS OF VALHALLA BECKON THEIR NEW MASTER?
DISPERSE, YOU VAPORS AND FOGS! DONNER, YOUR THUNDEROUS LORD, COMMANDS YOU!
COME, WIFE! IN VALHALLA, SOJOURN WITH ME
THEY ARE HASTENING TO THEIR END-- THESE GODS WHO DREAM THEY ARE STRONG AND ENDURING!
I ALMOST BLUSH TO BE OF THEIR NUMBER
BUT-- WHAT WAILING SOUND DO I HEAR?
RHINEGOLD! RHINEGOLD PURE!
FOR YOUR LOST GLORY DO WE GRIEVE!
OH, GIVE US THE GLEAMING RHINEGOLD AGAIN!
LOSE! BID THOSE ACCURSED NIXIES BOTHER US NO MORE!


YOU IN THE WATER--HEED WOTAN'S COMMAND!
YOU HAVE SEEN THE LAST OF THE GOLD YOU ONCE DID GUARD
FROM THIS DAY FORTH, ONLY IN THE GODS' INCREASE OF SPLENDOR MAY YOU SUN YOURSELVES!
RHINEGOLD! OH, IF ONLY IN THE WAVES THERE YET SHONE OUR TREASURE PURE!
DOWN IN THE DEPTHS, ALONE, CAN TRUTH AND GOODNESS BE FOUND
MOST BASE AND FALSE ARE ALL WHO REVEL ABOVE...!

BOOK TWO

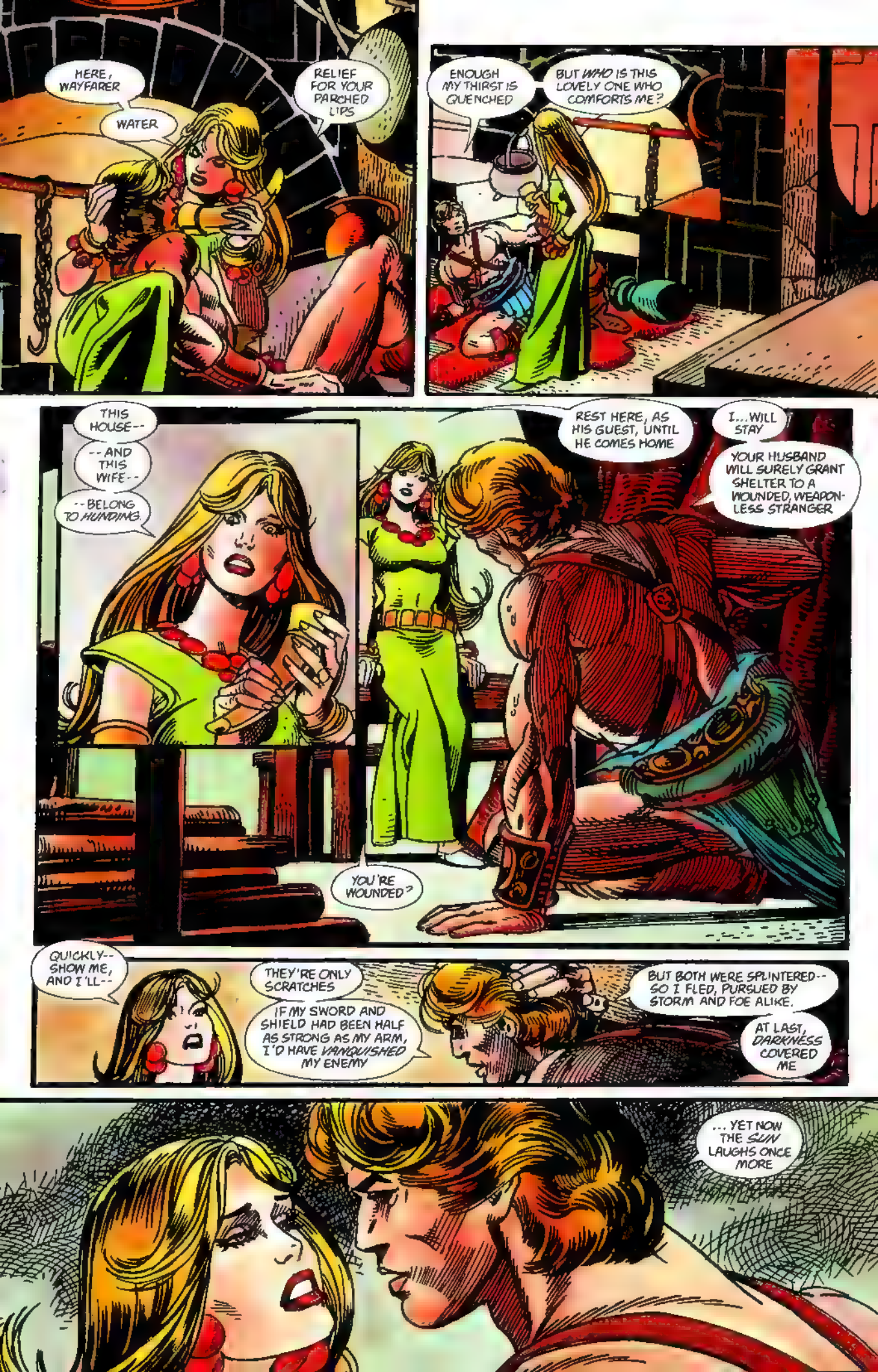
THE VALKYRIE



WHOEVER OWNS--THIS HEARTH--
--HERE-- I MUST--
--REST

HUNDING?

WHO'S THERE?
WHAT MAN IS THIS - LYING BY OUR FIRE?
CAN HE BE ILL?
OR HAS HE FALLEN FROM SHEER WEARINESS?
HE BREATHES, AT LEAST
THEN -- HE MERELY SLEEPS
YES
HOW STRONG HE SEEMS, HOWEVER SPENT AND TIRED...
A.. DRINK


HERE, WAYFARER
WATER
RELIEF FOR YOUR PARCHED LIPS
ENOUGH MY THIRST IS QUENCHED
BUT WHO IS THIS LOVELY ONE WHO COMFORTS ME?
THIS HOUSE--
--AND THIS WIFE--
--BELONG TO HUNDING
REST HERE, AS HIS GUEST, UNTIL HE COMES HOME
I...WILL STAY
YOUR HUSBAND WILL SURELY GRANT SHELTER TO A WOUNDED, WEAPONLESS STRANGER
YOU'RE WOUNDED?
QUICKLY--SHOW ME, AND I'LL--
THEY'RE ONLY SCRATCHES
IF MY SWORD AND SHIELD HAD BEEN HALF AS STRONG AS MY ARM, I'D HAVE VANQUISHED MY ENEMY
BUT BOTH WERE SPLINTERED--SO I FLED, PURSUED BY STORM AND FOE ALIKE.
AT LAST, DARKNESS COVERED ME
...YET NOW THE SUN LAUGHS ONCE MORE

BUT I FEAR YOU'VE TENDED ONE WHO'S CURSED BY FATE.
MAY ALL EVIL BE TURNED FROM YOU!
I MUST GO-- FOR WHERE I LINGER, TROUBLE FINDS ME.
THEN STAY HERE!
YOU CANNOT BRING MISFORTUNE...
...TO THOSE WHO ABIDE WITH IT, DAY BY DAY.
THEN, I WILL WAIT H--
HOOFBEATS!
MY HUSBAND COMES.
HUNDING...
EXHAUSTED ON OUR HEARTH I FOUND THIS MAN, DRIVEN HERE BY DIREST NEED!
OH? AND HAVE YOU-- LOOKED AFTER HIM?
AS A GUEST, I GAVE HIM WELCOME

SHE GAVE ME WATER AND SHELTER.
WOULD YOU CHIDE HER FOR THAT?
WOMAN--
--SET THE MEAL FOR US MEN!
YES, HUSBAND
SACRED, STRANGER, IS MY HEARTH.
SACRED, TOO, IS MY HOME -- SO TREAT IT THUS
... YOU MUST HAVE COME FAR, YET YOU HAVE NO HORSE. FROM WHERE DID YOU COME?
I CAME HERE BY A ROAD UNKNOWN. TO A PLACE I KNOW NO BETTER
I'D BE HAPPY IF YOU CAN TELL ME WHERE I'VE WANDERED
IT'S UNDER HUNDING'S ROOF YOU SIT
AND IF YOU GO WESTWARD WHEN YOU DEPART--
--YOU'LL FIND THE KINSMEN WHO GUARD HUNDING'S HONOR.
HOW LIKE TO MY WIFE'S HIS FEATURES ARE!
IN HIS EYES, AS IN HERS, GLEAMS THE GUILE OF THE SERPENT!

AND NOW, MAY I ASK MY GUEST HIS NAME?
IF YOU'RE WARY OF ME, TELL THE WOMAN HERE
SEE HOW EAGER SHE IS TO LEARN IT?
GLADLY I'D KNOW WHO YOU ARE, GUEST
I COULD WISH MY NAME WERE 'PEACEFUL' OR 'JOYFUL'.
. BUT THE NAME FORCED UPON ME IS-- "WOEFUL"
"WOLFE" WAS MY FATHER CALLED
I AM ONE OF TWINS--BUT SISTER AND MOTHER I SCARCELY REMEMBER
FOR, WARLIKE AND STRONG WAS WOLFE--AND NEVER WANTING FOR FOEMEN
"OFTEN WE WENT A-HUNTING, SON AND FATHER TOGETHER
"AND ONE DAY WE RETURNED WEARY FROM THE DAY'S CHASE--
"--TO FIND OUR WOLF'S-LAIR BURNT TO ASHES--
"-- MY MOTHER, DEAD--
"-- MY SISTER, VANISHED WITHOUT TRACE"
THE NEIDUNGS' CRUEL HORDE HAD DEALT US THIS HARSH BLOW!

"AS OUTLAWS WE FLED, AND DWELT FOR YEARS IN THE WILD FOREST, MY FATHER AND I.
"A WOLF-CUB TELLS YOU THIS TALE--
"FOR, AS WOLF-CUB, OR WOLFING, AM I KNOWN TO MANY!
"AND EVER, THE NEIDUNGS HOUNDED US, HUNTED US...
"...THOUGH SLAIN BY THE WOLVES FELL MANY A HUNTER!
"AYE, WE SCATTERED THE FOE LIKE CHAFF..
"BUT THEN, ALL TRACE OF MY FATHER I LOST.
"AN EMPTY WOLF-SKIN WAS ALL I FOUND
"NO LONGER COULD I STAY IN THE WOOD. MY HEART LONGED FOR THE COMPANY OF MEN AND WOMEN.
"YET BY ALL I MET, NO MATTER WHERE, I WAS BRANDED AN OUTLAW.
"GRIM FEUDS AROSE, WHEREVER I WENT. WRATH MET ME AT EVERY TURN
"THUS DO I CALL MYSELF 'WOEFUL'-- FOR WOE IS ALL THAT IS MINE"

TRULY, STRIPLING, YOU WERE SHOWN NO GRACE BY THE FATE-WEAVING NORNS.
BUT TELL US HOW YOUR WEAPON WAS LOST
A SORROWFUL MAIDEN CRIED OUT FOR MY HELP
HER UNCARING KINSMEN WISHED TO WED HER TO ONE HER HEART DID NOT CHOOSE.
"TO HER SWIFT DEFENSE I LEAPED-- AND GLADLY!
"BUT IT WAS HER BROTHERS I FELLED--
"--AND THE MAIDEN BATHED THE DEAD WITH HER TEARS.
"AYE, THEN THE SLAIN MEN'S KIN CAME AT ME LIKE A STORM--
"--VOWING BLOODY VENGEANCE.

"ENEMIES ON ALL SIDES ROSE AND ASSAILED ME--
"--TILL SWORD AND SHIELD WERE HEWN, AT LAST, FROM MY HAND.
"THEN, STANDING WEAPONLESS AND WOUNDED--
"-- I BEHELD THE MAID *DIE* BY THE HAND OF THE DEAD GROOM'S KIN
"NO REASON TO GO ON FIGHTING, WHEN SHE LAY DEAD BESIDE THE HUSBAND SHE NEVER KNEW...
"SO I FLED ON FOOT FROM THE KILL-MADDENED HOST."

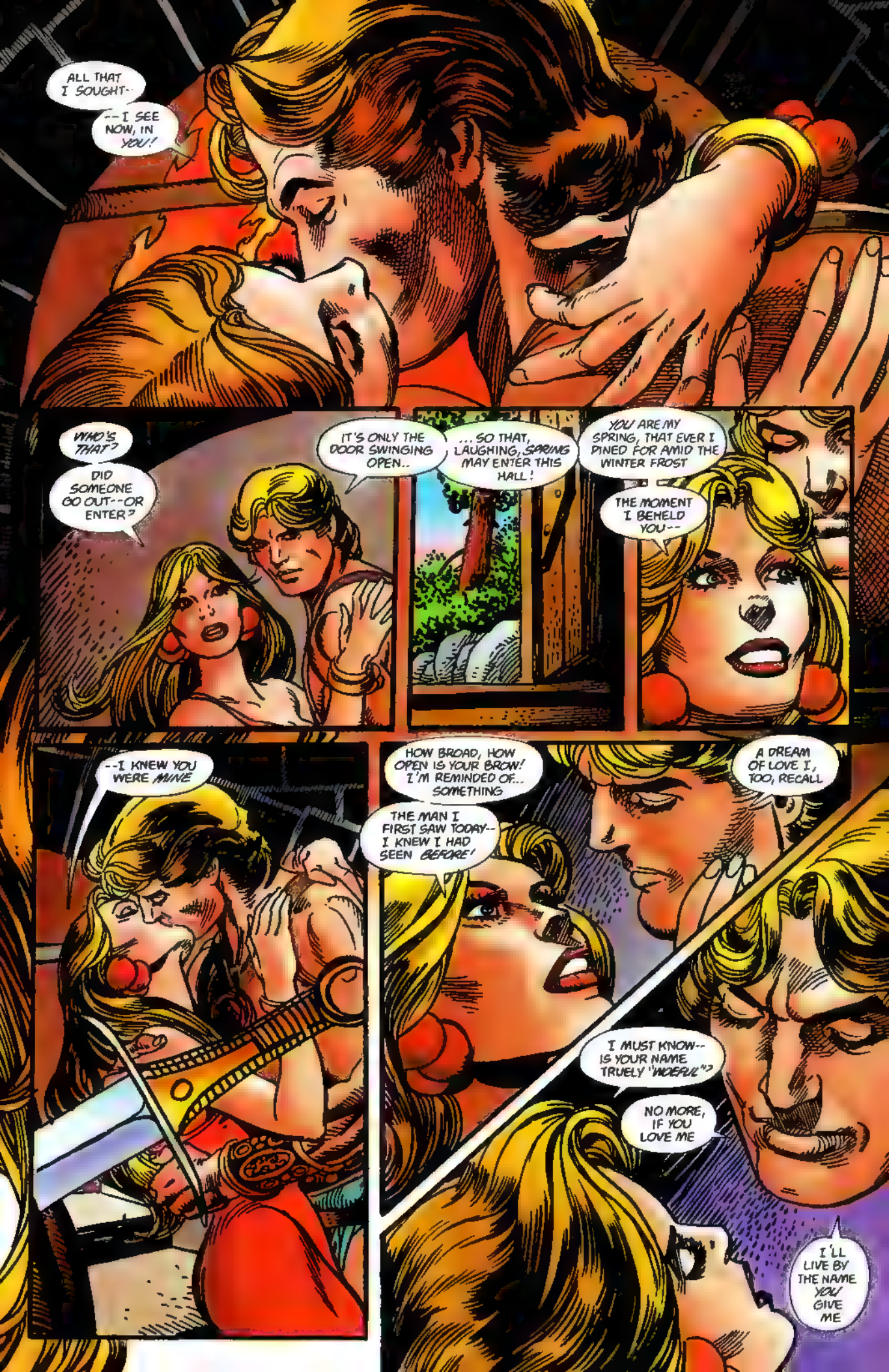
YOU ASKED--AND NOW YOU KNOW--
--WHY NONE DO CALL ME "PEACEFUL."
AND I KNOW A WILD-BLOODED BREED--HATED BY ALL--AND BY ME, AS WELL!
SUMMONED FORTH, I CAME TOO LATE TO SEEK REVENGE FOR KINSMEN SLAIN AT A WEDDING--
--AND NOW I RETURN HOME TO FIND THE MURDERER IN HAVEN UNDER MY OWN ROOF!
WOLFING! YOUR LIFE SHALL PAY FOR THE NEIDLING DEAD!
NNNOOO!
FORTH FROM THE HALL, WOMAN!
PREPARE MY NIGHT-DRINK, THEN WAIT FOR ME IN BED!
UNTIL THE DAWN, WOLF-CUB, YOU ARE MY GUEST
BY THE DAY I DO CHOOSE FOR OUR FIGHT TO THE DEATH!

ARM YOURSELF WITH YOUR TRUSTIEST WEAPON--
--FOR YOU WILL SORELY NEED IT, COME THE SUNRISE!
YOU HAVE HEARD MY WORDS
BE ON YOUR GUARD!
ONCE, MY FATHER TOLD ME-- WHEN MOST NEEDED, A SWORD I WOULD FIND AND WIELD
THE WOMAN FOR WHOM I LONG--SHE WHOSE CHARM BOTH WOUNDS AND DELIGHTS--IS HELD IN THRALL BY THE NEIDUNG WHO MOCKS A WEAPONLESS FOE
FATHER, O MY FATHER-- WHERE IS YOUR SWORD--
--THAT STOUT SWORD TO BE SWUNG IN BATTLE, WHEN RAGE BURSTS FORTH FROM MY BREAST?
EH?
WHAT BRIGHT GLEAM IS THAT, REFLECTED FROM THE TRUNK OF THE ASH-TREE THAT SKEWERS THIS HOUSE?
IS IT THE LOOK THAT LINGERED BEHIND, WHEN HUNDING'S WIFE WENT FORTH FROM THE HALL?
ARE YOU ASLEEP, GUEST?

IT IS I! LISTEN TO ME..
HUNDING LIES IN DEEP SLEEP, FOR I DRUGGED THE DRAUGHT I MIXED HIM
USE THIS NIGHT TO GOOD PURPOSE!
YOU ARE HERE
ALL IS WELL
I'VE COME TO SHOW YOU--
--A WEAPON.
THE HILT OF A SWORD--PROTRUDING FROM THE TREE?
OH, IF ONLY YOU COULD MAKE IT YOURS--THEN I MIGHT CALL YOU FIRST AMONG HEROES--
--FOR ONLY BY HIM CAN IT BE WON!
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND
THEN HEARKEN TO WHAT I WILL TELL YOU.
IN TIME PAST, HUNDING TOOK AS HIS WIFE, AGAINST HER WILL...
...ONE WHO HAD BEEN BARTERED TO HIM BY THIEVES.

"HUNDING'S KINSMEN HAD ASSEMBLED IN THIS VERY PLACE, TO HONOR HIS WEDDING
"AND I? SADLY I WATCHED, THROUGH ALL THEIR CAROUSING--
"--WHEN, OF A SUDDEN, A STRANGER ENTERED.
"HE WAS AN OLD AND GREY-CLOAKED MAN--SO SLOUCHED HIS HAT THAT ONE OF HIS EYES WAS HIDDEN.
"BUT THE OTHER EYE FLASHED SO THAT ALL DID FEAR IT!
"I ALONE, WHEN I LOOKED AT HIM, FELT SORROW AND SOLACE, ALL IN ONE
"GLANCING AT ME, HE SCOWLED AT ALL THE OTHERS--
"--AS HE SWUNG THE GREAT SWORD IN HIS HANDS--
"--AND PLUNGED IT UP TO THE HILT INTO THE ASH-TREE'S STEM!"

"I KNEW, THEN, WHO IT WAS THAT, IN SORROW, HAD GREETED ME
"THEN, AS HE STRODE OUT OF THE HALL, THE GREY MAN SAID:
" THE SWORD BELONGS--
"--TO HIM WHO DRAWS IT FROM ITS PLACE!"
"THOUGH SORELY THEY STRUGGLED, NOT ONE OF THE HEROES COULD WIN THE WEAPON FOR HIS OWN
"FROM THAT DAY TO THIS, THE STRONGEST HAVE TUGGED AT THE STEEL...
"...YET NOT AN INCH HAS SWORD EVER STIRRED IN THE STEM.
"IN SILENCE STILL IT CLEAVES--
--AND NOW I KNOW FOR WHOM IT WAS PLACED THERE!
OH, IF I COULD BUT FIND HERE THE FRIEND BROUGHT FROM AFAR BY A WOMAN'S HOPE, THAT I MIGHT EMBRACE HIM--!
BELOVED LADY--
--THAT FRIEND HOLDS YOU, AT LAST!
BOTH WOMAN AND SWORD ARE HIS!


ALL THAT I SOUGHT--
--I SEE NOW, IN YOU!
WHO'S THAT?
DID SOMEONE GO OUT--OR ENTER?
IT'S ONLY THE DOOR SWINGING OPEN..
...SO THAT, LAUGHING, SPRING MAY ENTER THIS HALL!
YOU ARE MY SPRING, THAT EVER I DINED FOR AMID THE WINTER FROST
THE MOMENT I BEHELD YOU--
--I KNEW YOU WERE MINE
HOW BROAD, HOW OPEN IS YOUR BROW! I'M REMINDED OF... SOMETHING
THE MAN I FIRST SAW TODAY-- I KNEW I HAD SEEN BEFORE!
A DREAM OF LOVE I, TOO, RECALL
I MUST KNOW-- IS YOUR NAME TRUELY "MIDEAL"?
NO MORE, IF YOU LOVE ME
I'LL LIVE BY THE NAME YOU GIVE ME

AND YOUR FATHER'S NAME -- WAS SIGURE?
HE WAS A WOLF TO FOXES, BUT HIS TRUE NAME WAS VOLSA
YOU ARE -- A VOLSUNG?
IF SO, THAT SWORD WAS THRUST INTO THE TRUNK FOR YOU.
THEN LET MY LOVE CALL YOU -- WHAT IT HAS FOUND YOU.
SIEGMUND SHALL BE YOUR NAME
SIEGMUND YOU MAY CALL ME
FOR SIEGMUND I AM --
-- AS THIS SWORD, WHICH MY FATHER SIGURE I'D FIND WHEN MOST I NEEDED IT, WILL BEAR ME WITNESS!
LOVE MOST PURE -- CONSUMING DESIRE -- BURNING BRIGHT WITHIN MY BREAST --
-- DRIVE ME ON TO DEEDS, AND DEATH!
NEEDFUL!
THAT IS YOUR NAME, YOU CONQUERING STEEL!
SHOW ME YOUR SHARP AND SUNDERING TOOTH!
COME FORTH FROM YOUR SCABBARD --
-- TO ME!

SIEGMUND THE VOLSUNG YOU SEE BEFORE YOU, WOMAN-- NOW WIFE!
AS BRIDE-GIFT I BRING YOU THIS SWORD!
I'LL BEAR YOU FAR FROM THE HOUSE OF MY FOE--IF YOU'LL BUT FOLLOW ME FORTH!
SIEGLINDA AM I, WHO LONGED FOR YOU--
--YOUR OWN TWIN SISTER--
--WON EVEN AS YOU'VE WON YOUR SWORD!
BOTH BRIDE AND SISTER, BE TO YOUR BROTHER--

- - THAT VOLSUNG BLOOD MAY FLOURISH FOREVER!

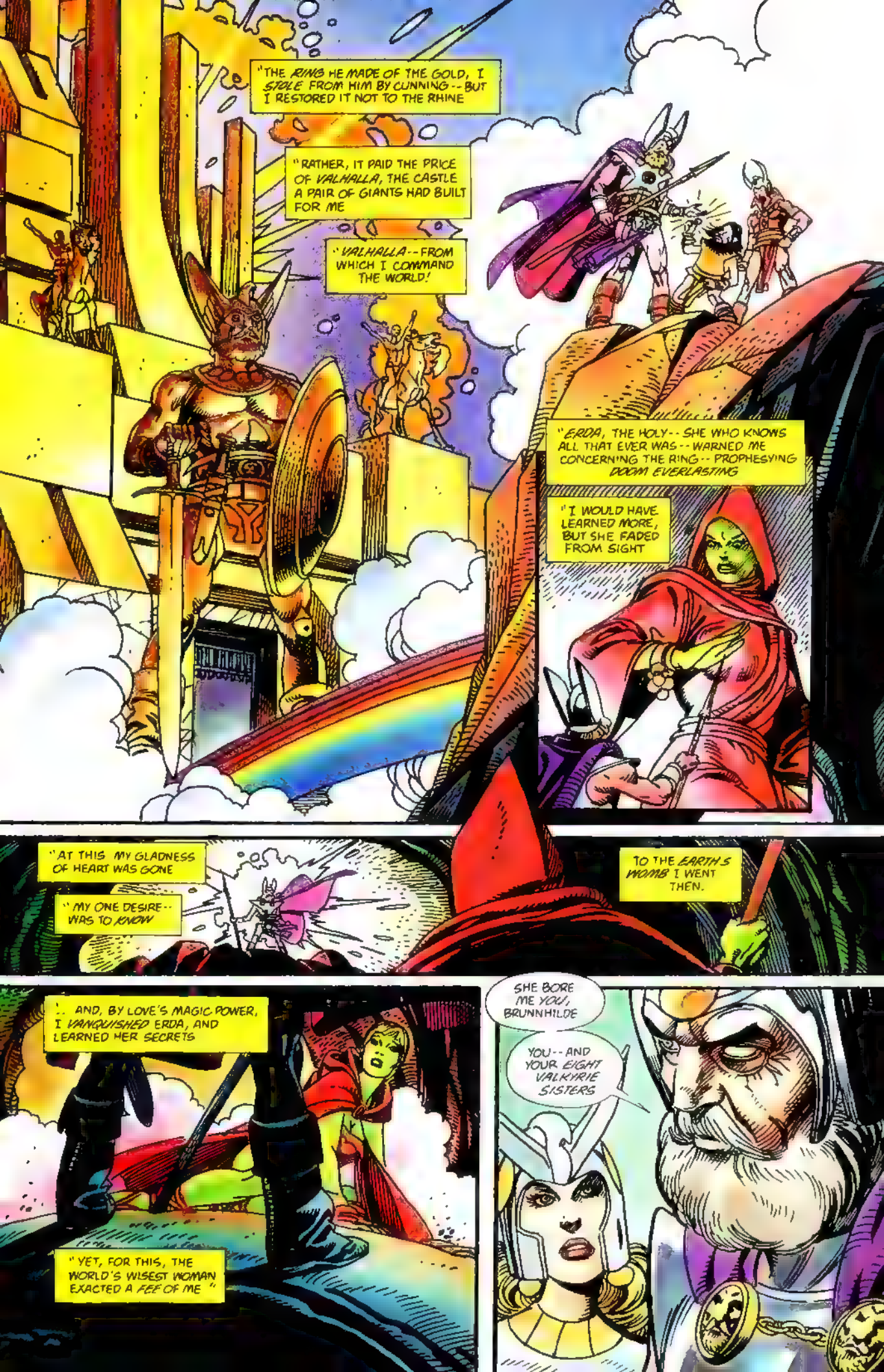
Act the Second
BRUNNHILDE!
I HEAR GREAT WOTAN!
BITTER STRIFE SHALL SOON BREAK FORTH IN THE WORLD OF MEN, MY VALKYRIE
STORM TO THE FRAY, AND CAUSE THE VOLSUNG TO TRIUMPH!
LET HUNDING CHOOSE FOR HIMSELF WHERE TO HIDE NO PLACE IN VALHALLA HAS HE!
UP, THEN! TO HORSE-- AND HASTEN TO THE FIELD!
HOJOTOHO! HEIAHA!
AS EVER, I OBEY YOUR COMMANDS.

BUT BE WARNED, MY FATHER -- FRICKA, YOUR WIFE, APPROACHES!
AND DEARLY THOUGH I LOVE THE STRIVING OF BOLD MEN -- THIS BATTLE YOU ALONE MUST BRAVE.
I GO -- AND LEAVE YOU TO YOUR FATE
THE SAME OLD STORM
THE SAME OLD STRIFE
BUT I MUST ACT WITH FIRMNESS!
HUSBAND! I HAVE HEARD HUNDING'S PRAYER FOR VENGEANCE --
-- AND, AS WEDLOCK'S GUARDIAN, I'VE GIVEN MY WORD TO PUNISH THOSE TWO WHO MOCK THE VOWS OF MARRIAGE!
I HOLD UNHOLY THE VOW THAT BINDS UNLOVING HEARTS, WIFE
WHAT NONSENSE ARE YOU BABBLING?
DO YOU CALL HOLY THE SHAME THAT BLOSSOMS FORTH FROM A TWIN-BORN PAIR?
WHO'S EVER HEARD OF TWO SUCH ONES AS LOVERS?
WELL, YOU ARE HEARING ABOUT IT NOW!

ARE WE OTHER GODS, THEN, NOTHING TO YOU, SINCE YOU FATHERED THAT WILD VOLSUNG TRIBE?
BUT HOW CAN I WAIL ABOUT VOWS OF WEDLOCK TO YOU--
--YOU, WHO WERE THE FIRST TO BETRAY THEM?
WOMAN..
WELL, AT LEAST YOU MAKE THEM OBEY ME--EVEN BRUNNHILDE, WHOM YOU LOVE THE MOST!
BUT NOW THAT YOU'VE WANDERED EARTH'S FORESTS WEARING NEW NAMES, SUCH AS WOLFE, OR VOLSA--
--WHY NOT TRAMPLE ME, ONCE AND FOR ALL?
YES--BETRAYED! I CAN ONLY WATCH, WHEN YOU MARCH OFF TO BATTLE WITH THE WRETCHED VALKYRIES YOU SIRED!
FRICKA, YOU CAN ONLY CONCEIVE OF THINGS THAT HAVE ALREADY HAPPENED--
--WHILE MY SPIRIT BROODS ON THINGS NOT YET BROUGHT FORTH!
LISTEN TO ME, WOMAN..
WE GODS SORELY NEED SOMEONE--A HERO WHOM WE HAVE NOT SHIELDED, AND WHO IS NOT BOUND BY OUR LAW.
ONLY SUCH A MAN MAY ACCOMPLISH THE DEED WHICH NO GOD CAN ACHIEVE--
--YET WHICH MUST BE DONE FOR THE GODS!
WITH DARK SAYINGS, YOU SEEK TO CONFUSE ME!
WHAT DEED BEYOND THE POWER OF THE GODS COULD BE DONE BY A MORTAL HERO--
SINCE ONLY BY OUR GRACE CAN ANY MAN BE STRONG?
THEN HIS OWN HEART'S COURAGE COUNTS NOT AT ALL?
WHO BREATHED INTO MEN THEIR VERY SOULS?
WHO OPENED THEIR EYES, THAT THEY MAY SEE?
BEHIND YOUR SHIELD THEY MAY APPEAR STRONG, THESE MEN YOU PRAISE SO--BUT I AM NOT DECEIVED!
YOU WILL NOT SHELTER THIS YOUNG VOLSUNG FROM ME, WOTAN!
HE LIVES ONLY THROUGH YOU--AND IS BOLD THROUGH YOU ALONE!

HE GREW UNAIDED, IN BITTER SORROW, WIFE!
MY SHIELD NEVER SHELTERED HIM--NEVER PROTECTED HIM!
THEN SHIELD HIM NOT TODAY!
TELL THE VALKYRIE- THE AGENT OF YOUR WILL--THAT HE MUST DIE!
NAY! I CANNOT SLAY HIM
HE FOUND MY SWORD, IN HIS TIME OF NEED
BOTH SWORD AND NEED CAME FROM YOU!
THE VOLSUNG FALLS--FOR FRICKA'S HONOR!
REMOVE, THEN, ALL MAGIC FROM THE SWORD--AND SHATTER THE BLADE!
SWORDLESS LET HIM BE FOUND BY HUNDING!
DOES WOTAN NOW PLEDGE ME HIS OATH?
...AYE...
VALKYRIE! THE WAR-FATHER AWAITS YOU
HE WILL INSTRUCT YOU HOW THE DIE HAS BEEN CAST

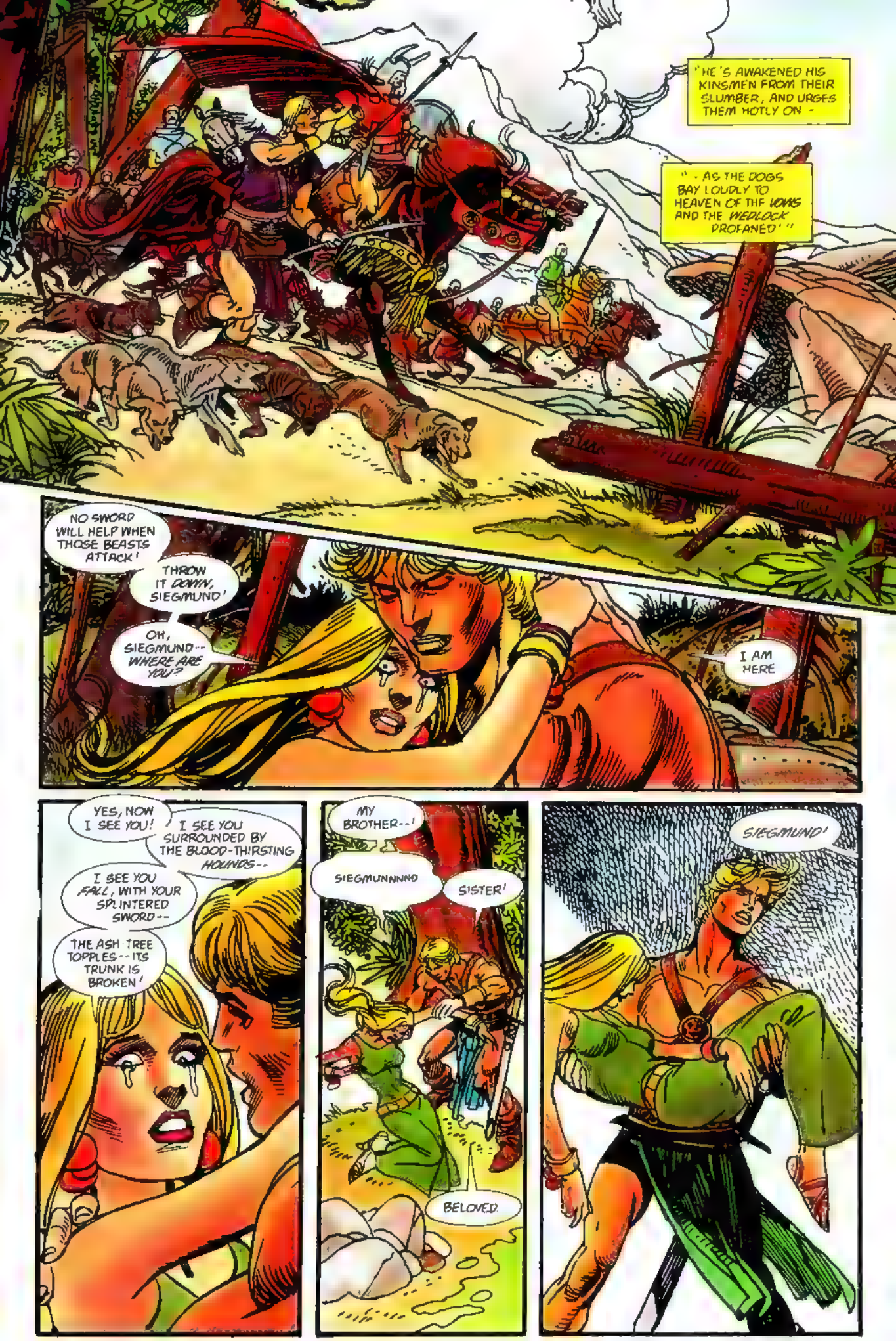
BADLY ENDED YOUR QUARREL, I FEAR, MY FATHER ..
ELSE FRICKA WOULD NOT LAUGH AT THE OUTCOME
YOU SEEM SO SAD - SO TROUBLED
BY SELF - FORGED SNARES AM I BOUND, BRUNNHILDE
I AM THE LEAST FREE OF ALL WHO LIVE!
I HARDLY KNOW YOU, WHEN YOU SPEAK THUS!
I BEG YOU -- TELL ME WHAT GNAWS AT YOUR HEART
WHAT AM I, IF I AM NOT YOUR WILL?
YES.
LONG PAST, AS THE DELIGHTS OF YOUNG LOVE FADED, IT WAS POWER MY SPIRIT THEN CRAVED
BUT -- WHAT IF, BY THE VERY SPEAKING, I MAKE WEAKER THE CONTROLLING MIGHT OF MY WILL?
I WON MYSELF THE WORLD, LURED INTO DISHONESTY BY CUNNING LOSE -- WHO THEN VANISHED
YET I COULD NOT RENOUNCE LOVE...NOT ENTIRELY.
BUT ALBERICH, THE CRAVEN NIBELUNG DWARF -- HE FORSWORE ALL LOVE!
BY THAT CURSE HE GAINED THE GLEAMING GOLD GUARDED BY THE RHINEMAIDENS --
-- AND WITH IT, POWER BEYOND MEASURE!


"THE RING HE MADE OF THE GOLD, I STOLE FROM HIM BY CUNNING -- BUT I RESTORED IT NOT TO THE RHINE
"RATHER, IT PAID THE PRICE OF VALHALLA, THE CASTLE A PAIR OF GIANTS HAD BUILT FOR ME
"VALHALLA -- FROM WHICH I COMMAND THE WORLD!
"ERDA, THE HOLY -- SHE WHO KNOWS ALL THAT EVER WAS -- WARNED ME CONCERNING THE RING -- PROPHESYING DOOM EVERLASTING
"I WOULD HAVE LEARNED MORE, BUT SHE FADED FROM SIGHT
"AT THIS MY GLADNESS OF HEART WAS GONE
"MY ONE DESIRE -- WAS TO KNOW
TO THE EARTH'S WOMB I WENT THEN.
"... AND, BY LOVE'S MAGIC POWER, I VANQUISHED ERDA, AND LEARNED HER SECRETS
"YET, FOR THIS, THE WORLD'S WISEST WOMAN EXACTED A FEE OF ME"
SHE BORE ME YOU, BRUNNHILDE
YOU -- AND YOUR EIGHT VALKYRIE SISTERS

'WITH YOU SHIELD-MAIDENS, I HOPED TO AVERT THE DOOM WHICH ERDA HAD FORETOLD -- THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS.
" THAT OUR FOES MIGHT FIND US STRONG, I HAD YOU VALKYRIE BRING ME THE MOST VALIANT OF FALLEN WARRIORS
"AYE, YOUR DUTY WAS TO DRIVE MEN ON TO SAVAGE WAR -- AND THUS TO THEIR DEATHS -- "
-- SO THAT HOSTS OF DAUNTLESS HEROES MIGHT BE GATHERED IN VALHALLA, AGAINST THAT FINAL BATTLE!
AND MANY A ONE HAVE WE BROUGHT -- SO WHY DO YOU FEAR?
ERDA ALSO FORETOLD THAT, THROUGH VENGEFUL ALBERICH, OUR END MAY YET BEFALL US!
IF HE EVER REGAINS THE RING, HE COULD USE ITS RUNES TO MAKE MY VERY HEROES WAGE WAR UPON ME!
AND SO, ALARMED, I RESOLVED TO WREST THE RING FROM HE WHO POSSESSES IT!
"FAFNER, THE GIANT WHO SLEW HIS BROTHER FOR THE RHINEGOLD I PAID THEM, NOW GUARDS HIS HORDE IN THE FORM OF A FEARSOME DRAGON.
" THE RING, AT LEAST, I MUST RECOVER -- BUT I CANNOT STRIKE ONE PROTECTED BY MY OWN OATH
'AH, BUT A HERO NEVER HELPED BY MY FAVOR -- ACTING SOLELY ON HIS OWN -- HE COULD ACHIEVE WHAT I MUST NOT.'
"THINKING MYSELF SO VERY CLEVER, I ROAMED THE FOREST WITH YOUNG SIEGMUND, EVER GOADING HIM TO REBEL AGAINST THE GODS
"NOW, HE HAS THE SWORD HE NEEDS - BUT MY GODDESS WIFE KNOWS I FORGED IT FOR HIM, EVEN LED HIM TO IT
"AND SO I NOW MUST BEND MY WILL TO FRICKA'S WISHES!"

ERDA ALSO TOLD ME 'WHEN THE GLOOMY FOE OF LOVE GETS A SON IN HIS WRATH, THE HIGH GODS DOOM SHALL BE AT HAND'.
NOT LONG SINCE, ALBERICH WON A WOMAN -- WON HER WITH GOLD, NOT LOVE
THE CHILD OF SPITE GROWS NOW IN HER WOMB, WHILE I, WHO WOO BY LOVE, MUST SEE MY MORTAL SON SLAIN!
NO!
YOU CANNOT MEAN IT, ALL-FATHER!
YOU TOLD ME TO PROTECT THE VOLSUNG-!
AND NOW I COMMAND YOU - SIEGMUND YOU SHALL VANQUISH, THAT HUNDING MAY PREVAIL!
YOU TAUGHT ME TO LOVE SIEGMUND, AS YOU DID
I WILL SHIELD HIM IN SPITE OF YOUR WAVERING WORD!
WITHIN MY BOSOM, CHILD, BURNS RAGE ENOUGH TO LAY IN DREAD RUIN A WORLD THAT ONCE WERE NAUGHT BUT SMILES!
CARRY OUT MY COMMAND -- OR FACE MY WRATH!
CUT DOWN SIEGMUND!
OFT HAVE I SEEN THE WAR FATHER ENRAGED
-- BUT NEVER ONCE LIKE THIS!
HOW HEAVY FEELS MY ARMOR WHEN EVIL IS MY CAUSE
WOE UNTO YOU, MY VOLSUNG
...WITH SORROW MUST I, YOUR UNKNOWN FRIEND, FORSAKE YOU!

WAIT HERE, SWEET WIFE!
YOU MUST REST A WHILE
FARTHER FARTHER!
NO! WHY DID YOU FLEE FROM ONE WHO IS BROTHER-HUSBAND--EVEN FRIEND?
AWAY! SHUN ME, AS A WOMAN ACCURSED!
IN SHAME AND DISHONOR, THIS BODY HAS DIED
FLING IT FROM YOU - AND FLY FROM THE CORPSE!
FOR BOTH SHAME AND DISHONOR, HUNDING'S BLOOD SHALL PAY!
HERE WE STAND--AND HERE I'LL SLAY HIM!
WHEN NEEDFUL'S POINT PIERCES HIS HEART, ALL YOUR WRONGS WILL BE AVENGED!
AROOOOOOOOO
DO YOU HEAR, SIEGMUND?
THE CLAMOR OF HUNDING'S HORN--
--THE HOWLING OF HIS HOUNDS!


"HE'S AWAKENED HIS KINSMEN FROM THEIR SLUMBER, AND URGES THEM HOTLY ON -
" - AS THE DOGS BAY LOUDLY TO HEAVEN OF THE HOMS AND THE WEDLOCK DROFANED' "
NO SWORD WILL HELP WHEN THOSE BEASTS ATTACK!
THROW IT DOWN, SIEGMUND!
OH, SIEGMUND-- WHERE ARE YOU?
I AM HERE
YES, NOW I SEE YOU!
I SEE YOU SURROUNDED BY THE BLOOD-THIRSTING HOUNDS--
I SEE YOU FALL, WITH YOUR SPLINTERED SWORD--
THE ASH TREE TOPPLES--ITS TRUNK IS BROKEN!
MY BROTHER--!
SIEGMUNNNND
SISTER!
BELOVED
SIEGMUND!

LOOK ON ME --
-- THE ONE YOU SOON MUST FOLLOW!
WHO ARE YOU?
YOU SEEM SO FAIR- YET SO GRIM--!
ONLY HEROES DOOMED TO DIE DO GAZE UPON ME.
HE WHOM I DO GREET IS CHOSEN-- AND MUST GO WITH ME TO WOTAN'S VALHALLA
AND MY SISTER-BRIDE?
SHE STILL MUST BREATHE THE AIR OF EARTH
THEN GREET FOR ME VALHALLA'S HEROES AND FATHER WOTAN AND TELL THEM SIEGMUND WILL NOT COME!
FOOL! I BUT BRING YOU WARNING IT IS HUNDING'S HAND THAT SHALL BRING YOU DOWN.
HUNDING? MY SWORD SHALL MAKE HIM YOUR PREY, NOT ME!
HE WHOSE SWORD YOU HOLD NOW WITHDRAWS HIS MAGIC SPELL-- AND DOOMS YOU TO DEATH
THEN, IF I CANNOT SHIELD THE WOMAN I LOVE, I'LL FARE TO NO VALHALLA WHEN I FALL
LET HELLA HOLD ME FOREVER!
SO LITTLE DO YOU PRIZE LIFE EVER-LASTING?
WHILE SIEGLINDA LIVES, NONE BUT I SHALL GUARD HER!

THIS SWORD THAT A TRUE MAN RECEIVED FROM A FALSE--
--THIS SWORD WHICH FAILS ME WHEN FACING A FOE--
--WILL SERVE WHEN TURNED ON THE FRIEND!
TAKE BOTH OUR LIVES, NEEDFUL, WITH ONE FELL STROKE--!
HOLD, VOLSUNG!
SPARE SIEGLINDA--AND SIEGMUND, TOO, SHALL LIVE!
YOU HAVE MY WORD. YOUR FATE IS ALTERED!
YOUR SWORD SHALL PREVAIL--BY THE POWER OF THE VALKYRIE!
FAREWELL, SIEGMUND--HERO MOST BLEST--

ON THE BATTLEFIELD YOU WILL SEE ME AGAIN!
AROOOOOOO
YOU WHO DO CALL - MAKE READY FOR THE FRAY!
NEEDFUL SOON SHALL PAY YOU YOUR DUE!
MOTHER
I'M SO AFRAID..
WHY DON'T FATHER ...AND THE BOY COME BACK..?
FLAMES. THE HOUSE. ON FIRE.
OH, HELP US, BROTHER SIEGMUND
SIEGMUND--!?

WHERE ARE YOU ?
THE MIST--
I-- CANNOT SEE- !
STAND AND FIGHT, WOEFUL ONE !
COWARD ! YOU'VE THOUGHT TO FIND ME UNWEAPONED!
COME, THEN- AND, BY FRICKA, BE SLAIN !
THREATEN NOT WITH WOMEN, HUNDING !
IT IS NO GODDESS WHO MUST FIGHT ME NOW -- BUT YOU.
FOR, FROM THE TREE THAT GROWS UPON YOUR HEARTH I DREW THIS SWORD...
COME AND TRY THE TASTE OF ITS STEEL !

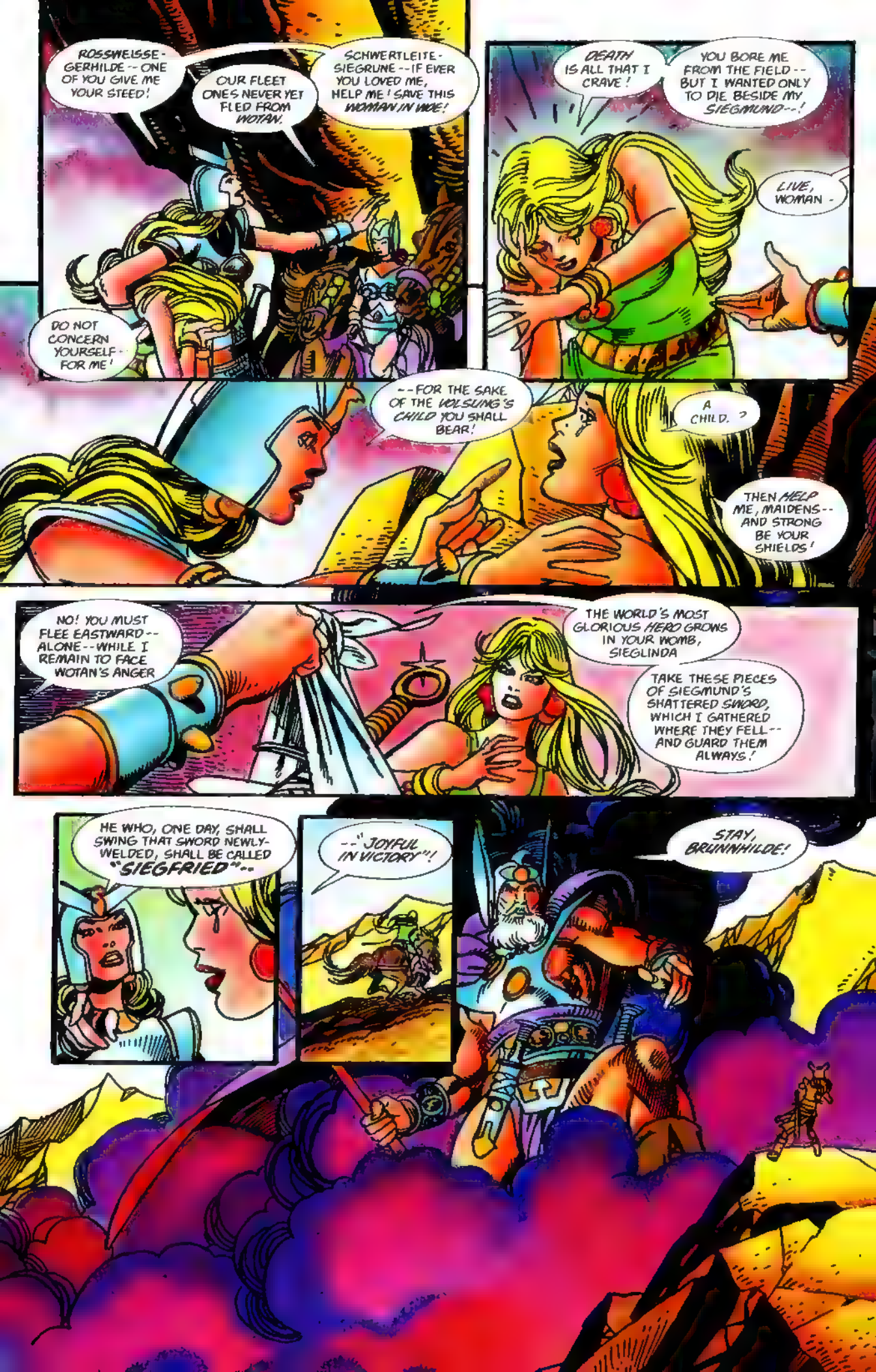
NO! STAY YOUR HANDS, BOTH!
SLAY ME FIRST!
MY SHIELD PROTECTS YOU, SIEGMUND!
STRIKE HUNDING NOW!
TRUST TO YOUR SWORD!

STRIKE!
STRIKE!
BACK, VOLSUNG!
BACK FROM MY SPEAR!
IN SPLINTERS BE THE SWORD!
AAAAAAAA

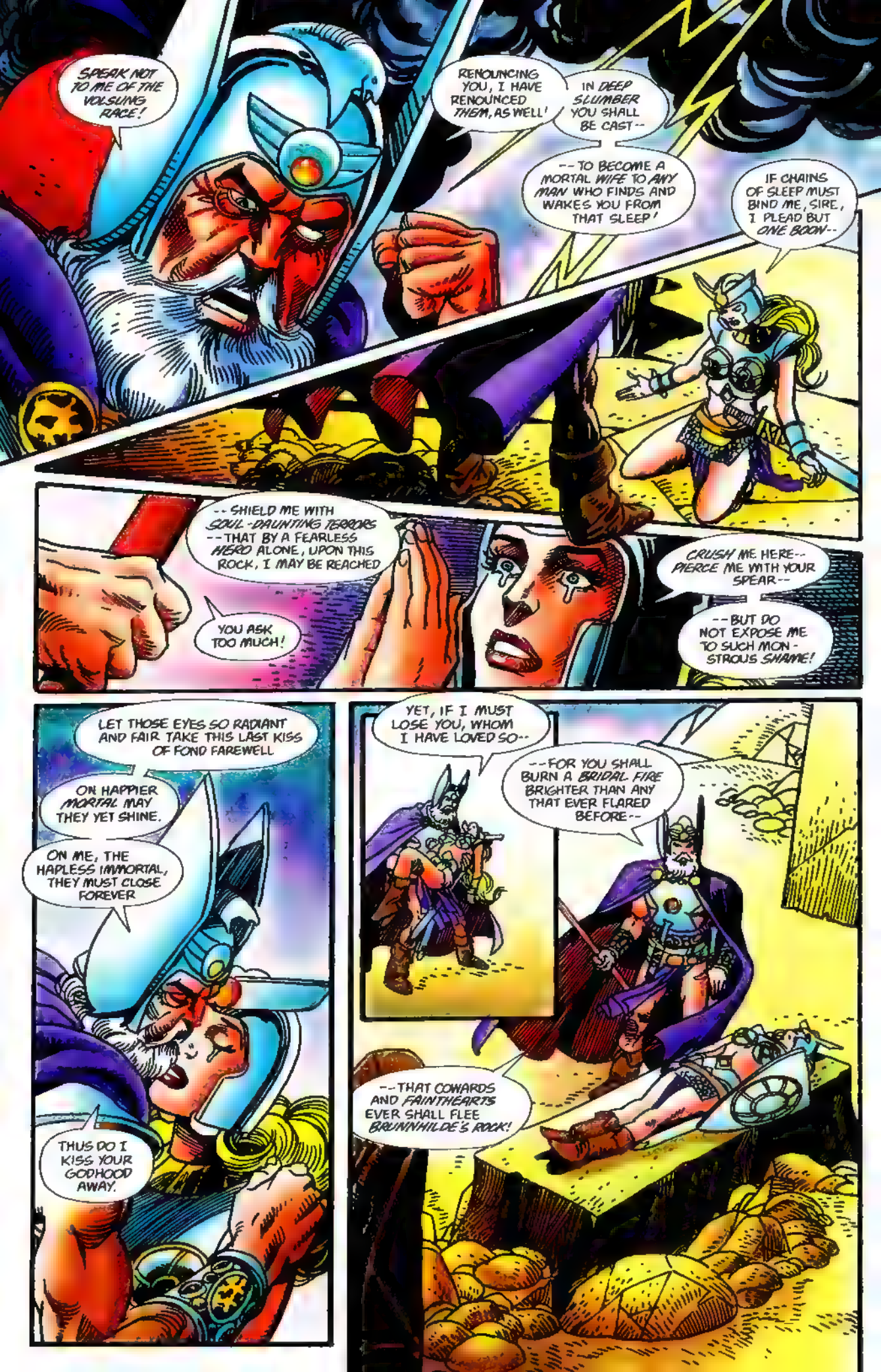
AAAAAAA
SIEGMUND--!
TO HORSE, WOMAN--
--THAT I MAY SAVE YOU!
AND NOW--YOU SLAVE--
--PERISH!
KNEEL BEFORE FRICKA-- AND TELL HER THAT WOTAN'S SPEAR HAS AVENGED HER SHAME.
GO!

Act the Third
BUT FOR BRUNNHILDE··
WOE TO THE GUILTY ONE, WHEN I DO OVERTAKE HER IN FLIGHT!
HOJOTOHO! HEIAHA!
WHO HANGS FROM YOUR SADDLE, HELMWIGE?
SINTOLT, THE HEGELING, DEAR SISTER!
FASTEN YOUR CHESTNUT FAR FROM ORTLINDE'S GREY, THEN- FOR HER MARE CARRIES WITTIG, THE IRMING··
--AND SINTOLT AND WITTIG WERE EVER FOEMEN!
WHY LINGER HERE AT ALL, WALTRAUTE?
LET US AWAY TO VALHALLA WITH THESE SLAIN!
WE ARE BUT EIGHT.
BRUNNHILDE STILL TARRIES BY THE VOLSUNG!

NO! HERE SHE COMES! BRUNNHILDE, HE!
BUT, GRIMGERDE -- SEE HOW HER STEED GRANE PANTS, EVEN STAGGERS, SO SWIFT IS HIS FLIGHT!
AND -- WHAT LIES THERE UPON HER SADDLE?
'TIS NO MAN --
-- NO HERO --
-- BUT A WOMAN!
BRUNNHILDE -- WHAT HAS BEFALLEN, THAT YOU'VE RIDDEN HERE SO FURIOUSLY?
HELP ME, YOU VALKYRIES!
THE WAR-FATHER PURSUES ME!
THIS IS SIEGLINDA, SISTER AND BRIDE TO SIEGMUND
WOTAN TURNED HIS FURY AGAINST THE VOLSUNG, BUT I SHIELDED HIM -- TILL OUR FATHER HIMSELF CAUSED HIM TO BE SLAIN!
EVEN THEN, I FLED, BEARING HIS BRIDE -- TO HIDE FROM WOTAN'S WRATH.
YOU WERE MAD, SISTER -- TO DISOBEY HIS HOLY COMMAND!
LOOK! A STORM COMES FROM THE NORTH!
THE WAR-FATHER!


ROSSWEISSE-GERHILDE--ONE OF YOU GIVE ME YOUR STEED!
OUR FLEET ONES NEVER YET FLED FROM WOTAN.
SCHWERTLEITE-SIEGRUNE--IF EVER YOU LOVED ME, HELP ME! SAVE THIS WOMAN IN WOE!
DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF-FOR ME!
DEATH IS ALL THAT I CRAVE!
YOU BORE ME FROM THE FIELD--BUT I WANTED ONLY TO DIE BESIDE MY SIEGMUND--!
LIVE, WOMAN-
--FOR THE SAKE OF THE VOLSUNG'S CHILD YOU SHALL BEAR!
A CHILD.?
THEN HELP ME, MAIDENS--AND STRONG BE YOUR SHIELDS!
NO! YOU MUST FLEE EASTWARD--ALONE--WHILE I REMAIN TO FACE WOTAN'S ANGER
THE WORLD'S MOST GLORIOUS HERO GROWS IN YOUR WOMB, SIEGLINDA
TAKE THESE PIECES OF SIEGMUND'S SHATTERED SWORD, WHICH I GATHERED WHERE THEY FELL--AND GUARD THEM ALWAYS!
HE WHO, ONE DAY, SHALL SWING THAT SWORD NEWLY-WELDED, SHALL BE CALLED "SIEGFRIED"--
--"JOYFUL IN VICTORY"!
STAY, BRUNNHILDE!

YOU VALKYRIES--IF YOU FEAR TO SHARE HER FATE, THEN FLY FROM THE LOST ONE!
GO HENCE--AND RETURN NOT!
IT IS NOT I WHO SENTENCE YOU, BUT YOU WHO SHAPED YOUR OWN PUNISHMENT!
HERE I STAND, FATHER... AWAITING YOUR SENTENCE
YOU WERE MY WILL--MY SHIELD-MAID--MY CHOOSER OF THE SLAIN--YET YOU HAVE STRIVEN AGAINST MY WISHES
THUS, VALKYRIE SHALL YOU BE NO LONGER.
AM I TO BE--CAST OUT?
I BUT FULFILLED WOTAN'S COMMAND.
A COMMAND I WITHDREW!
AYE, BUT ONLY WHEN FRICKA HAD WEANED YOUR WILL FROM ITS PURPOSE.
I AM NOT WISE LIKE YOU, ALL-FATHER, BUT I KNEW YOU LOVED THE VOLSUNG
WHEN I HAD SEEN HIM--HAD HEARD HIS LAMENT--MY ONLY THOUGHT WAS HOW I COULD SERVE HIM!
YOU DRANK LAUGHING THE JOYS OF LOVE--WHILE I DRANK DEEP OF SORROW AND BITTERNESS.
BY YOUR FRIVOLOUS HEART BE GUIDED HENCEFORTH, SINCE YOU HAVE TURNED AWAY FROM ME.
I MUST GREET YOU NO MORE!
AND SO YOU 'AVE DONE WHAT I SO GREATLY YEARNED TO DO!
YET, ONE DAY A MATCHLESS HERO MUST SPRING FROM VOLSUNG'S SEED


SPEAK NOT TO ME OF THE VOLSUNG RACE!
RENOUNCING YOU, I HAVE RENOUNCED THEM, AS WELL!
IN DEEP SLUMBER YOU SHALL BE CAST--
--TO BECOME A MORTAL WIFE TO ANY MAN WHO FINDS AND WAKES YOU FROM THAT SLEEP!
IF CHAINS OF SLEEP MUST BIND ME, SIRE, I PLEAD BUT ONE BOON--
--SHIELD ME WITH SOUL-DAUNTING TERRORS --THAT BY A FEARLESS HERO ALONE, UPON THIS ROCK, I MAY BE REACHED
YOU ASK TOO MUCH!
CRUSH ME HERE-- PIERCE ME WITH YOUR SPEAR--
--BUT DO NOT EXPOSE ME TO SUCH MONSTROUS SHAME!
LET THOSE EYES SO RADIANT AND FAIR TAKE THIS LAST KISS OF FOND FAREWELL
ON HAPPIER MORTAL MAY THEY YET SHINE.
ON ME, THE HAPLESS IMMORTAL, THEY MUST CLOSE FOREVER
THUS DO I KISS YOUR GODHOOD AWAY.
YET, IF I MUST LOSE YOU, WHOM I HAVE LOVED SO--
--FOR YOU SHALL BURN A BRIDAL FIRE BRIGHTER THAN ANY THAT EVER FLARED BEFORE--
--THAT COWARDS AND FAINTHEARTS EVER SHALL FLEE BRUNNHILDE'S ROCK!

LOGE-- HARK TO MY WORD!
I, WHO FOUND YOU FIRST A FIERY BLAZE--
I, FROM WHOM YOU DID FLEE, IN FAR-WANDERING FIRE--
--I, WHO ONCE DID BIND YOU--
--NOW BID YOU BREAK FORTH!
APPEAR, FIRE-GOD!
APPEAR!
ENCIRCLE THIS ROCK WITH YOUR FLAME!
AND LET NONE WHO FEAR THE SPEAR OF WOTAN--

--EVER PASS THROUGH THIS FIRE!

BOOK THREE

SIEGFRIED

KLINGK KLANGK KLINGK KLANGK KLINGK KLANGK KLINGK KLANGK
WEARISOME DRUDGERY!
LABOR ALL WASTED!
KLINGK KLANGK KLINGK KLANGK
THE MIGHTIEST SWORD THAT EVEN I, SKILLED MIME, DID EVER FORGE--
HSSSSSSS
--A SWORD THE HANDS OF GIANTS MIGHT WISH TO WIELD--
--AND YET SIEGFRIED, THAT INSOLENT BOY FOR WHOM IT IS FASHIONED, COULD SNAP IT IN TWO AT ONE STROKE--
--AS IF THE THING WERE BUT A CHILD'S TOY!

SPLANNG
THERE IS ONE SWORD HE COULDN'T SHATTER, THOUGH.
"NEEDFUL" WOULD BATTLE EVEN HIS STRENGTH--
--IF ONLY I COULD JOIN THAT BLADE'S FRAGMENTS BACK TOGETHER!
THUS FAR, NOT ALL MY BLACKSMITH SKILLS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO WELD THEM ANEW

AH, IF I COULD BUT FORGE THAT WEAPON, SHATTERED YEARS AGO--
--WHAT A REWARD I'D WIN FOR ALL MY SHAME AND TOIL!
THE GIANT FAFNER-- NOW IN DRAGON FORM-- GUARDS HIS GOLD-HOARD, WITHIN THESE VERY WOODS.
IF HE WERE SLAIN, THE NIBELUNG'S RING WOULD BECOME MINE!
BUT THE ONLY SWORD FOR THE DEED IS "NEEDFUL," SWUNG BY SIEGFRIED'S CONQUERING YOUNG ARM--
--A SWORD I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO FORGE!
AND SO I WORK AT MAKING THIS SWORD, ONLY TO HUMOR THAT ARROGANT BOY, WHO--
HO!-HO!
HO!-HO!
HE COMES!
--THAT HIDEOUS SMITHY!
ARROOOOOOOO
COME ON, BEAR! COME ON!
THERE'S YOUR MEAL--

G-GET THAT BEAST OUT OF HERE, SIEGFRIED!
I WANT NO B-BEAR IN H-HERE!
I COME THUS PAIRED, OLD MIME-- THE BETTER TO PINCH YOU IF YOU'VE NOT DONE WHAT YOU SHOULD!
BRUIN-- ASK HIM NICELY FOR THE SWORD!
AROOOOOOO

WELL? YOU HEARD HIM
IF TH-THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT-- THEN LET HIM GO!

HERE LIES THE WEAPON YOU WANT.
I FINISHED IT ONLY TODAY!

WHY, THEN, YOU ARE SAFE--
--FOR TODAY.
ON YOUR WAY, BRUIN!
I NEED YOU NO MORE
HAHAHA

SLAY ALL THE BEARS YOU WANT, AND WELCOME!
BUT WHY BRING THE BEASTS HOME ALIVE?
HAHAHAHAHA
I WENT DEEP INTO THE FOREST, SEEKING A FIT COMPANION.
THE BEAR ANSWERED MY HORN'S CALL, AND I LIKED EVEN HIM BETTER THAN YOU.
SO I BROUGHT HIM HERE, TO ASK YOU FOR THE WEAPON
HAHAHAHAHA
WELL, HERE IT IS!
I MADE THE SWORD KEEN-EDGED
YOU'LL REJOICE IN ITS SHARPNESS!
WHAT GOOD IS ITS CUTTING-EDGE--
--UNLESS THE STEEL IS HARD AND TRUE?
HAH! YOU'D TRY TO PASS THIS FEEBLE PIN OFF FOR A SWORD?
KKRRAKKK

THERE-- TAKE BACK THE PIECES, YOU PITIFUL BUNGLER!
YOU PRATTLE FOREVER OF HOW YOU'LL FORGE ME A BLADE WORTHY TO DUEL WITH GIANTS--
-- BUT YOUR SKILL IS CLEARLY NOT THE EQUAL OF YOUR TALK!
I SHOULD HAVE BROKEN THAT SWORD ON YOUR STUPID SKULL!
SUCH GROSS INGRATITUDE!
BECAUSE WHAT I FORGE ISN'T PERFECT, YOU FORGET ALL THE GOOD THINGS I'VE MADE
HERE-- WOULD YOU LIKE SOME FOOD?
I'VE FIXED BOTH MEAT AND BROTH ESPECIALLY FOR YOU...
MEAT I ROAST FOR MYSELF!
GO SWILL YOUR FILTHY BROTH ALONE!
WHEN YOU WERE A BABE, I WAS YOUR NURSE...
AS YOU GREW, I FASHIONED YOU TOYS AND A SOUNDING-HORN.
..I'VE GUIDED YOU WITH WISE COUNSEL, AND TRAINED YOUR MIND IN THE WAYS OF WISDOM..
EVEN NOW, WHILE YOU WANDER TO YOUR HEART'S DESIRE, I STAY HERE, WORKING MYSELF TO DEATH, A POOR OLD DWARF...

AND IS MY ONLY REWARD FOR ALL MY SACRIFICE TO BE A BOY'S HOT-TEMPERED HATRED?
YOU'VE TAUGHT ME MANY THINGS, MIME.
BUT WHAT YOU MOST WANTED ME TO LEARN HAS PROVED A LESSON YOU COULDN'T TEACH
HOW TO ENDURE THE VERY SIGHT OF YOU!
YET YOU ALWAYS RETURN HERE!
THAT OUGHT TO SHOW YOU THAT OLD MIME IS DEAR TO YOUR HEART
WHAT THE OLD BIRD IS TO THE YOUNG, FEEDING IT IN ITS NEST, 'TIL THE FLEDGLING CAN FLY AWAY--
--THAT IS WHAT MIME IS TO YOU--
--WHAT HE MUST AND ALWAYS SHALL BE!
IF YOU'RE SO CLEVER, THEN TELL ME ONE THING MORE:
WHEN TWO BIRDS SANG TOGETHER IN THE SPRING, YOU SAID THEY WERE HUSBAND AND WIFE...
I SAW YOUNG WOLVES AND FOXES-- SUCKLED BY THEIR MOTHER, WHILE THEIR FATHER BROUGHT THEM FOOD
BUT WHERE IS YOUR DEAR, LOVING WIFE, MIME--
--THAT I MAY CALL YOUR MOTHER?
YOU.. MUST TRUST WHAT I TELL YOU.
I AM YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER, IN ONE!
LIAR! WHEN I SPY MY OWN FACE IN THE BROOK, IT'S NO MORE LIKE YOURS THAN A FISH IS LIKE A TOAD.
THAT'S WHY I MUST ALWAYS RETURN HERE-- UNTIL YOU TELL ME WHO MY FATHER AND MOTHER WERE!
WHAT "FATHER"? WHAT "MOTHER"?
MEANINGLESS QUESTIONS!
YOU NEVER TELL ME ANYTHING--UNLESS YOU ARE FORCED TO.

THEN OUT WITH IT, YOU MANGY OLD ROGUE!
P-PLEASE-- LET ME G-GO--
--AND I'LL T-TELL YOU-- WH-WHAT YOU W-WANT TO KNOW--!
SPEAK, THEN!
WHO ARE MY FATHER AND MOTHER?
I'LL TELL YOU--WHAT LITTLE I KNOW--
--AND YOU'LL SEE HOW, THOUGH I'M NEITHER FATHER NOR KINSMAN, YOU OWE ME YOUR LIFE.
I SHELTERED YOU OUT OF PITY--AND HOPED FOR THANKS, LIKE A FOOL!
A WOMAN I FOUND, WEEPING IN THE FOREST-- AND HELPED TO THIS CAVE.
WRITHING IN PAIN, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A CHILD... AND I HELPED HER, AS BEST I COULD.
SHE DIED... BUT LITTLE SIEGFRIED SURVIVED!

WHAT? MY MOTHER DIED-- BECAUSE OF ME?
AND COMMENDED YOU TO MY CARE! AH, THE TROUBLE I TOOK-- THE WORRY I ENDURED!
WHEN YOU WERE A BABE, I WAS YOUR NURSE...
THAT STORY I HAVE HEARD BEFORE!
TELL ME-- WHY AM I CALLED SIEGFRIED?
THAT'S WHAT YOUR DEAR MOTHER ASKED ME TO NAME YOU, THAT YOU MIGHT GROW TO BE STRONG AND FAIR
AS YOU GREW, I FASHIONED YOU TOYS AND A SOUNDING-HORN.
ENOUGH! WHAT NAME WAS MY MOTHER'S?
NAME? YOUR MOTHER'S? IN TRUTH, I HARDLY --YES! "SIEGLINDA".
SIEGLINDA WAS THE NAME OF THE WOMAN WHO BORE YOU!
AND LASTLY, TELL ME--WHO WAS MY FATHER?
HIM I HAVE NEVER SEEN-- I SWEAR IT!
BUT MY MOTHER TOLD YOU HIS NAME, SURELY!
HE FELL IN COMBAT--THAT'S ALL SHE SAID, AND LEFT THE FATHERLESS INFANT TO MY CARE.
I'VE GUIDED YOU WITH WISE COUNSEL, AND TRAINED YOUR MIND WITH THE WAYS OF WISDOM..

CEASE YOUR TIRESOME STARLING SONG!
WHAT PROOF HAVE YOU THAT YOUR STORY ISN'T JUST ANOTHER LIE?
I'VE PROOF THAT WILL CONVINCE YOU!
THERE'S SOMETHING I GOT FROM YOUR MOTHER.
FOR TROUBLE, FOOD, AND SERVICE...
...THIS WAS MY SOLE REWARD.
BEHOLD-- A SPLINTERED SWORD!
SHE SAID IT WAS BORNE BY YOUR FATHER--
--IN THE FIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS SLAIN!
THEN YOU SHALL FORGE THESE FRAGMENTS TOGETHER--
--AND FURNISH MY RIGHTFUL SWORD!

GET UP! HURRY, MIME! IF YOU HAVE ANY SKILL LEFT AT ALL, SHOW IT NOW!
I SWEAR THAT THE SWORD SHALL BE MINE--THIS VERY DAY!
AND WH-WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN IT'S FINISHED?

LEAVE THIS FOREST FOREVER--FOR NOTHING KEEPS ME HERE.
I SHALL FLY FAR AWAY, MIME, BEHOLDING YOU NO MORE!
STOP, BOY! SIEGFRIED--!

A NEW AND CROWNING WOE!
HOW DO I HOLD THE BOY HERE--LONG ENOUGH TO LEAD HIM, AT THE PROPER TIME, TO FAFNER'S LAIR?
AND HOW DO I WELD THESE SPLINTERS OF OBSTINATE STEEL?

IN NO FURNACE FIRE CAN THEY BE M-MELTED--NOR CAN MY HAMMER COPE WITH THEIR H-HARDNESS!
ALL THE NIBELUNG'S HATE AND TOIL AND SWEAT CANNOT MAKE "NEEDFUL" N-NEW AGAIN--
--NOR FORGE THE S-SWORD--INTO A WH-WHOLE--!

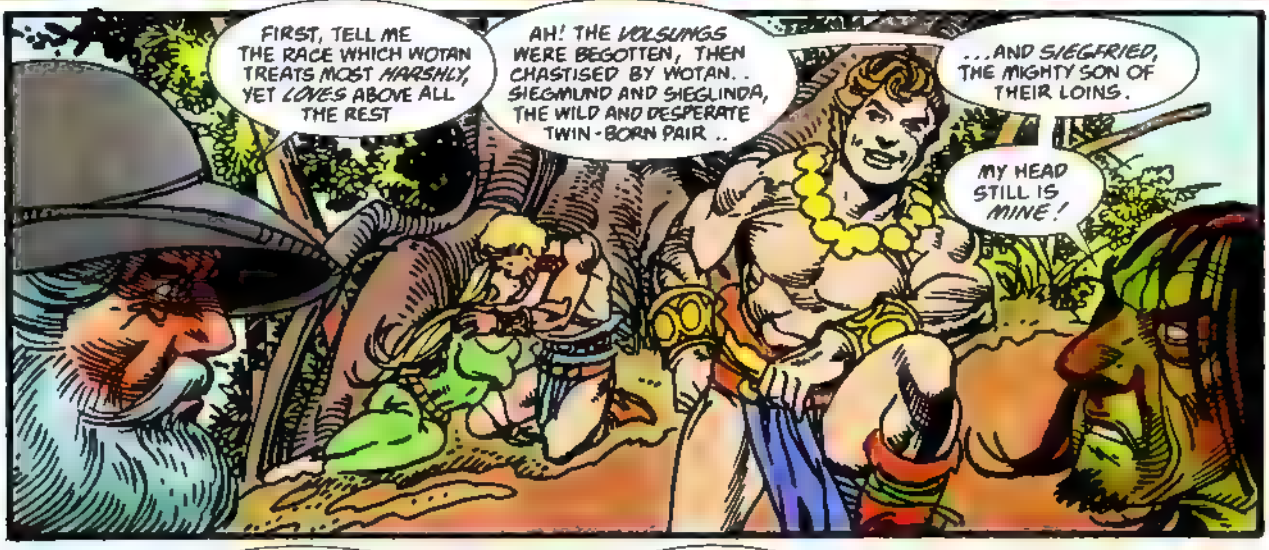
ALL HAIL, CUNNING SMITH!

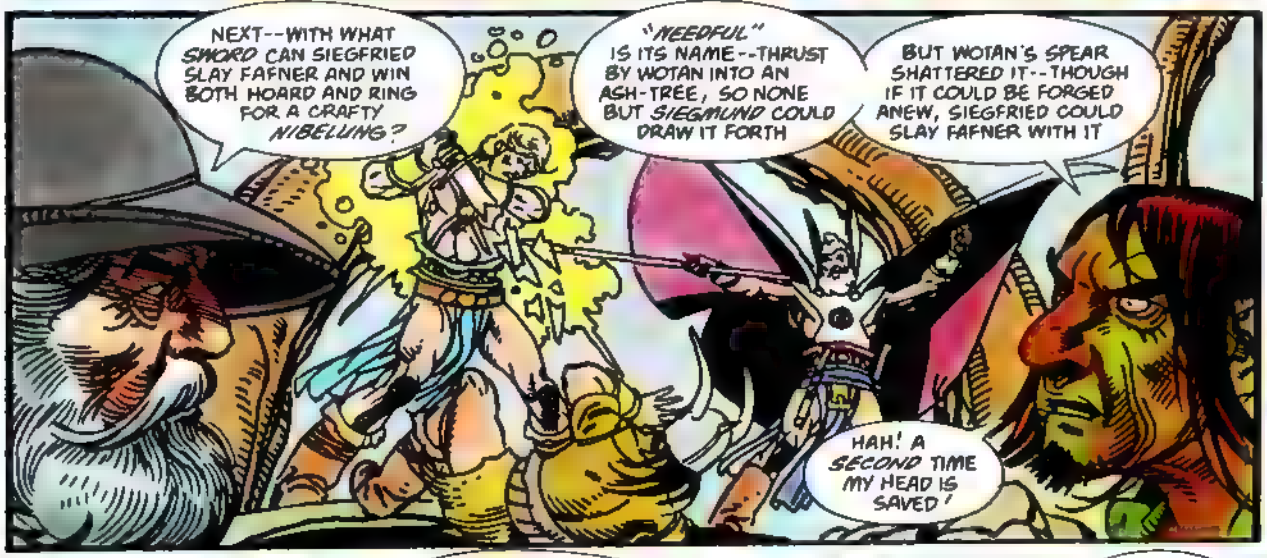
A WAYWORN GUEST CRAVES A SEAT BY YOUR HEARTH.

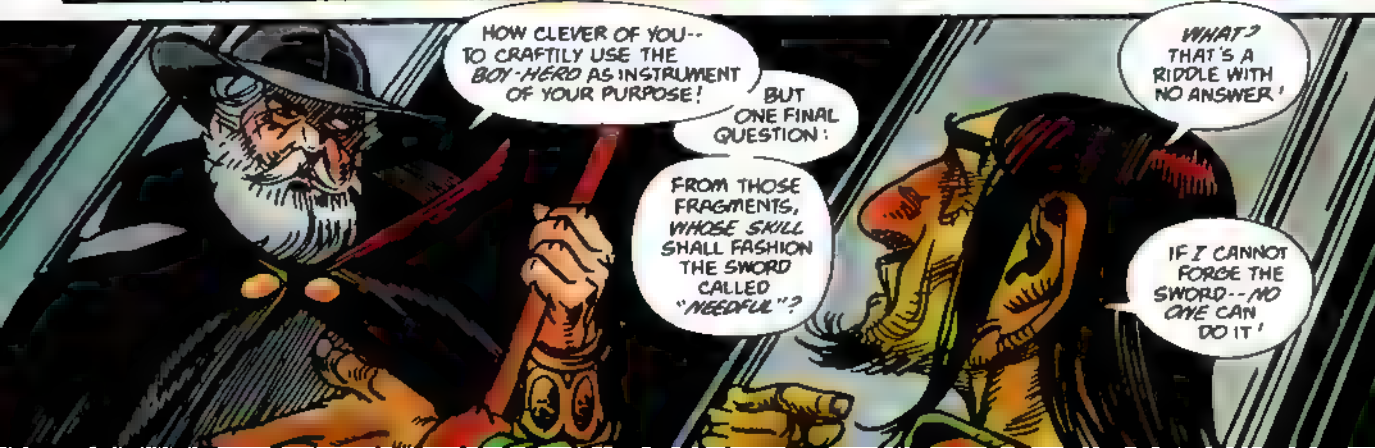
WHO IS IT THAT'S FOUND MY HOME IN THIS DESOLATE FOREST?
WH-WHO ARE YOU?
THE WORLD NAMES ME "WANDERER."
FROM FAR OFF I HAVE COME
I HAVE ROAMED MUCH, ON THE EARTH'S BROAD BACK
IF "WANDERER" NAMED, PRAY WANDER FROM HERE, WITHOUT HALTING TO REST!
GOOD MEN DO NOT BEGRUDGE ME WELCOME; ONLY EVIL MEN FEAR EVIL OF ME.
MANY MEN FIND USEFUL THE WISDOM I CAN BRING THEM
SOME MAY COVET IDLE KNOWLEDGE; I KNOW ENOUGH FOR MY OWN NEEDS.
SO, "WISE ONE," BE ON YOUR WAY!
NO, I THINK I'LL STAY HERE--AND WE'LL HAVE A WAR OF WITS.
MY VERY HEAD IS FORFEIT TO YOU, IF I DO NOT GIVE GOOD ANSWERS TO THREE QUESTIONS YOU ASK.
NOTHING ELSE TO DO--IF I'M TO GET RID OF THIS SPY!
VERY WELL, THEN! YOUR HEAD PAYS FOR YOUR LODGING
IT'S PAWNED. NOW SEEK TO REDEEM IT!

FIRST, ANSWER ME THIS.
WHAT RACE DWELLS IN THE EARTH'S DEEP GORGES?
IN NIBELHEIM, BLACK-HEARTED ALBERICH SUBDUED HIS DARK-ELF BROTHERS, THE NIBELUNGS, BY A MYSTIC RING--
--AND THEY PILED UP SHIMMERING GOLD, TO WIN HIM THE WORLD AND ITS GLORY!
WHAT IS YOUR SECOND QUESTION?
YOU KNOW MUCH, WANDERER, OF THE HIDDEN DEPTHS OF EARTH.
NOW, ANSWER ME THIS: WHAT MIGHTY RACE DWELLS ON EARTH'S FACE?
THE GIANTS LIVE THERE, ONCE RULED BY FASOLT AND FAFNER, WHO WON THE NIBELUNG HOARD FOR THEMSELVES.
BUT THESE BROTHERS QUARRELED ABOUT THE RING, AND FASOLT WAS SLAIN.
IN DRAGON'S SHAPE FAFNER NOW WATCHES THE GOLD.
ONLY ONE QUESTION REMAINS.
"UH... TELL ME WHAT RACE DWELLS ABOVE THE CLOUDS!"
"THE IMMORTAL GODS DWELL IN VALHALLA, WHERE GREAT WOTAN WIELDS HIS SPEAR MADE FROM THE WORLD-ASH TREE.
"BECAUSE IT GUARANTEES THE SACRED TRUTH OF TREATIES, ALL MUST BOW-- NIBELUNGS, GIANTS, AND GODS ALIKE--

--TO THE RUNESPEAR'S ETERNAL LORD!
Y-YOUR ANSWERS ARE RIGHT
GO ALONG WITH YOU, WANDERER
RUMMBLE
NAY YOU SHOULD HAVE ASKED FOR SOMETHING WORTH KNOWING, SINCE I'D WAGERED MY HEAD.
NOW I SHALL CLAIM YOURS, IF YOU FAIL TO ANSWER THREE QUESTIONS OF MINE.


FIRST, TELL ME THE RACE WHICH WOTAN TREATS MOST HARSHLY, YET LOVES ABOVE ALL THE REST
AH! THE VOLSUNGS WERE BEGOTTEN, THEN CHASTISED BY WOTAN.. SIEGMUND AND SIEGLINDA, THE WILD AND DESPERATE TWIN-BORN PAIR ..
...AND SIEGFRIED, THE MIGHTY SON OF THEIR LOINS.
MY HEAD STILL IS MINE!


NEXT--WITH WHAT SWORD CAN SIEGFRIED SLAY FAFNER AND WIN BOTH HOARD AND RING FOR A CRAFTY NIBELUNG?
"NEEDFUL" IS ITS NAME--THRUST BY WOTAN INTO AN ASH-TREE, SO NONE BUT SIEGMUND COULD DRAW IT FORTH
BUT WOTAN'S SPEAR SHATTERED IT--THOUGH IF IT COULD BE FORGED ANEW, SIEGFRIED COULD SLAY FAFNER WITH IT
HAH! A SECOND TIME MY HEAD IS SAVED!


HOW CLEVER OF YOU-- TO CRAFTILY USE THE BOY-HERO AS INSTRUMENT OF YOUR PURPOSE!
BUT ONE FINAL QUESTION:
FROM THOSE FRAGMENTS, WHOSE SKILL SHALL FASHION THE SWORD CALLED "NEEDFUL"?
WHAT? THAT'S A RIDDLE WITH NO ANSWER!
IF I CANNOT FORGE THE SWORD--NO ONE CAN DO IT!

FOOL! ALL THREE QUESTIONS YOU PUT TO ME CONCERNED FAR-OFF, MEANINGLESS THINGS.
THAT WHICH STOOD HERE AT HAND, AND WHICH YOU NEEDED TO KNOW, YOU FORGOT TO ASK--
--AND NOW YOUR OH-SO-CUNNING HEAD IS MINE!
YOU WHO WOULD DESTROY FAFNER -- HEAR THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF YOUR OWN DOOM!
YOOOOOOOOO
BY HIM WHO HAS NEVER FELT FEAR SHALL THE SWORD "NEEDFUL" BE FORGED!
SO GUARD YOUR HEAD WELL FROM TODAY, DWARF!
I LEAVE IT FORFEIT TO HIM WHO HAS NEVER LEARNED TO BE AFRAID!

HO THERE, IDLER! IS THE WORK FINISHED?
SHOW ME THE SWORD!
THE SWORD? HOW COULD I WELD IT--
--WHEN I'M FOREVER FILLED WITH FEAR?
NOW YOU'RE SPEAKING RIDDLES!
MUST I TEACH YOU EVEN HOW TO FORGE A SWORD?
NO, BUT I--I MUST TEACH YOU ONE THING MORE--
--SOMETHING I PROMISED YOUR MOTHER UPON HER DEATHBED THAT YOU'D LEARN FROM ME--
--THE MEANING OF FEAR!
THIS "FEAR..." WHAT IS IT?
IT'S THE CLUTCH OF GRIM HORROR-- WHEN THE LIMBS SHIVER, SHAKEN WITH TERROR--
--AND THE HEART HAMMERS WITHIN YOU, AS IF TO ESCAPE YOUR BREAST!
IT'S NOT A FEELING I HAVE EVER KNOWN
HOW CAN I LEARN IT FROM YOU?
I'VE THOUGHT IT ALL OUT: YOU'LL LEARN FEAR FROM THE DRAGON FAFNER, WHOSE LAIR LIES TO THE EAST-- NEAR THE WORLD.
SO LEAD ME THERE--AFTER YOU FORGE MY SWORD!
ALAS, I TOLD YOU-- I CANNOT!
THEN SHOW ME WHAT YOU'VE DONE SO FAR!
YOU? HOW CAN YOU DO ANYTHING, WHEN YOU WERE TOO LAZY TO PRACTICE MY CRAFT, ALL THESE YEARS?
WHERE THE MASTER HAS FAILED, HOW COULD HE EVER HAVE HELPED THE STUDENT?
KEEP OUT OF MY WAY--OR I'LL MELT YOU ALONG WITH THE STEEL!

Y-YOU'VE RUINED THE SWORD! WHY GRIND THE STEEL TO SPLINTERS?
IT MUST BE SHIVERED AND GROUND INTO SHREDS--
-- SO THAT THE SPLINTERS CAN BE MENDED, ALL TOGETHER!
HE WILL FORGE THE SWORD--I SEE IT PLAIN!
AND, IF NOTHING TEACHES HIM FEAR, MY HEAD FALLS TO THIS BOLD CHILD!
BUT -- IF HE DOES LEARN FEAR, THE DRAGON WILL NOT BE SLAIN-- AND HOW THEN SHALL I GAIN THE GOLDEN RING?
MY ONLY HOPE IS TO FIND SOME WAY TO SUBDUE THE BOY MYSELF!
MIME! QUICKLY--WHAT IS THE NAME OF THIS SWORD I'M MAKING?
ITS NAME, MY DARLING LAD, IS "NEEDFUL"...
...JUST AS THIS BREW IS NEEDFUL TO ME!
AFTER THE FIGHT, LET HIM DRINK BUT A DROP, AND HE'LL SLEEP.
AND WHILE HE DOES, I'LL GUT HIM, AND TAKE ALL THAT HE'S WON!
"NEEDFUL"!
YOU WERE BROKEN-- BUT I HAVE SHAPED YOU ANEW--
--NOR SHALL ANY SECOND BLOW SHATTER YOU INTO USELESS PIECES!

"NEEDFUL"-- CONQUERING SWORD!
ONCE MORE TO LIFE I HAVE AWAKENED YOU!
SSSSSSS

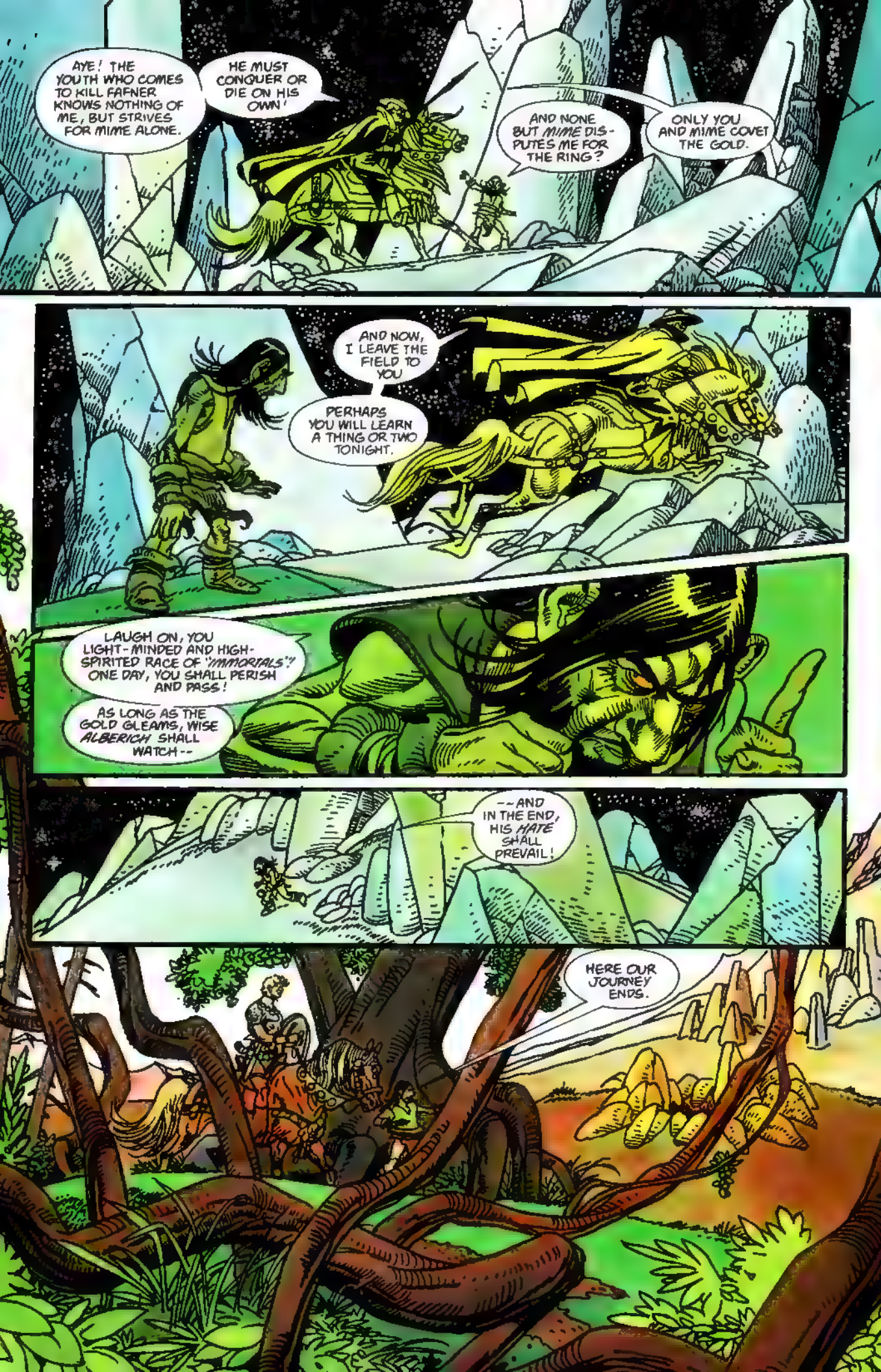
WOE TO ALL ROBBERS-- ALL TRAITORS-- ALL ROGUES--!

LOOK YOU, MIME--

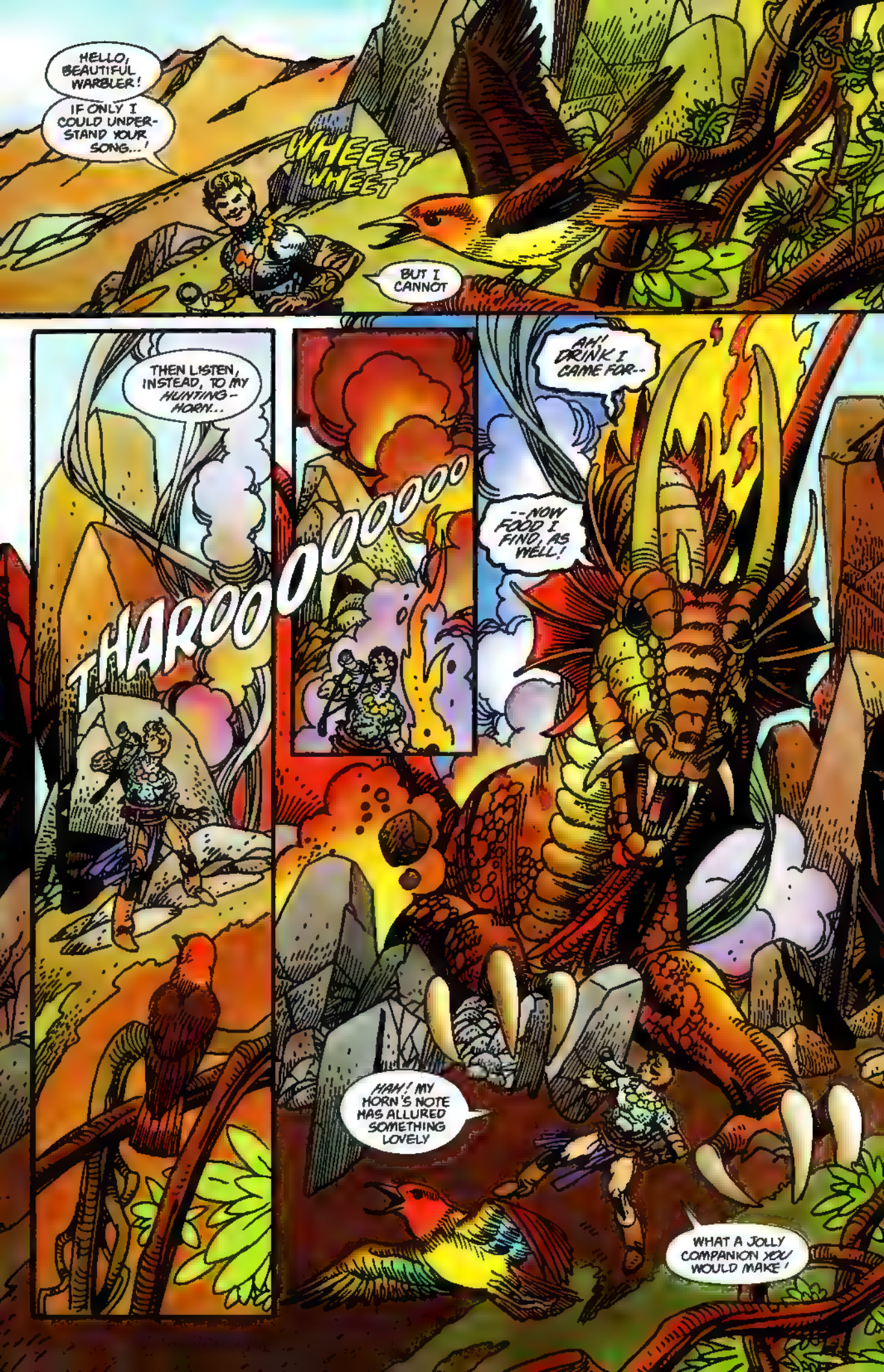
--THUS SUNDERS "NEEDFUL"--
SPLANG

--THE SWORD OF SIEGFRIED!

IN NIGHT-DREAR WOODS, I KEEP WATCH NEAR THE CAVE OF FAFNER--
--WITH EAR ALERT, WITH KEEN AND ANXIOUS EYE.
BUT-- WHAT GLEAM OF LIGHT SHIMMERS THERE?
IS IT THE DRAGON'S SLAYER?
NO! IT'S ONE WHOSE GUILE HAS DELUGED THE EARTH WITH GRIEF ENOUGH ALREADY!
SPARE IT FURTHER SORROW, YOU ONE-EYED WRETCH!
HO, ALBERICH!
I'VE COME TO WATCH, NOT ACT.
YOU EVER-PLOTTING TRICKSTER!
WHEN THE RING IS IN MY GRASP ONCE MORE, I'LL STORM VALHALLA ITSELF AND CAST DOWN YOU GODS!
I KNOW YOUR PLAN, BUT LITTLE DO I CARE
WHOEVER WINS THE RING SHALL RULE BY ITS MIGHT.
YOUR HEART'S MADE BOLD--BECAUSE OF A MERE BOY!
YOU'VE SIRED A HERO TO PLUCK THE FRUIT YOU DON'T DARE PLUCK FOR YOURSELF!
ALL MY HOPE NOW HANGS UPON HEROES.
BUT BEWARE OF YOUR BROTHER MIME, NOT OF ME, NIBELUNG LORD!
MIME?

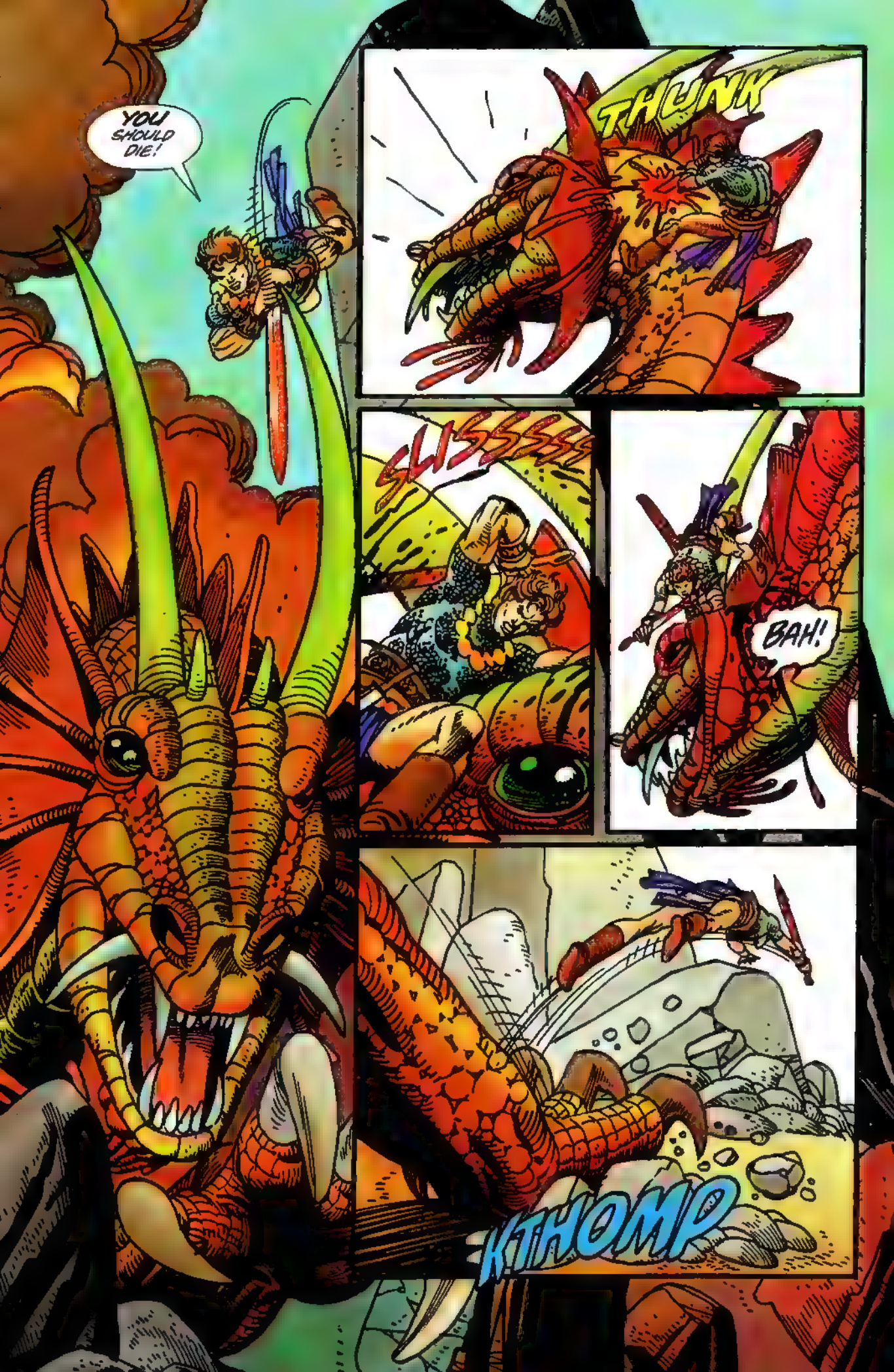

AYE! THE YOUTH WHO COMES TO KILL FAFNER KNOWS NOTHING OF ME, BUT STRIVES FOR MIME ALONE.
HE MUST CONQUER OR DIE ON HIS OWN!
AND NONE BUT MIME DISPUTES ME FOR THE RING?
ONLY YOU AND MIME COVET THE GOLD.
AND NOW, I LEAVE THE FIELD TO YOU
PERHAPS YOU WILL LEARN A THING OR TWO TONIGHT.
LAUGH ON, YOU LIGHT-MINDED AND HIGH-SPIRITED RACE OF "IMMORTALS"! ONE DAY, YOU SHALL PERISH AND PASS!
AS LONG AS THE GOLD GLEAMS, WISE ALBERICH SHALL WATCH--
--AND IN THE END, HIS HATE SHALL PREVAIL!
HERE OUR JOURNEY ENDS.

WE'VE COME FAR, MIME.
WHETHER OR NOT I LEARN WHAT *FEAR* IS, I SHALL PUSH ON ALONE--AND NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN.
BELIEVE ME, LAD, IF YOU CANNOT LEARN FEAR HERE AND NOW, NO *OTHER* PLACE OR TIME WILL EVER TEACH YOU.
THERE YAWNS THE CAVERN OF THE *DRAGON!* HE COULD SWALLOW YOU WHOLE!
I SHALL AVOID HIS FANGS, AND THUS HIS GULLET.
POISON SPEWS FROM HIS MOUTH--AND HIS SWEEPING *TAIL* COULD BREAK YOUR LIMBS LIKE GLASS!
THEN I'LL WATCH OUT FOR BOTH MOUTH AND TAIL. BUT TELL ME--
--HAS THE BRUTE A *HEART?*
A HEART OH, YES--ONE PITILESS AND CRUEL!
BUT IT LIES WHERE ALL HEARTS LIE, BEAST AND HUMAN ALIKE?
OF COURSE! *NOW* ARE YOU BEGINNING TO FEAR AT LAST?
NO! AND IF THAT'S ALL YOU CAN TEACH ME, BE ON YOUR WAY!
JUST WAIT! WHEN YOU'VE SEEN THE DRAGON, YOU'LL KNOW THE MEANING OF FEAR--AND YOU'LL REMEMBER MIME AND HIS LOVE!
MEANWHILE, I WILL REST BY YONDER SPRING.
FAFNER! SIEGFRIED! MAY EACH THE OTHER SLAY!
MIME'S NO PARENT OF MINE!
MY FATHER WAS LIKE *ME*, NO DOUBT--BUT, MY *MOTHER*--?
IF ONLY I COULD SEE HER--MY MOTHER--A *MORTAL WOMAN*--JUST ONCE!
WHEET WHEEET


HELLO, BEAUTIFUL WARBLER!
IF ONLY I COULD UNDERSTAND YOUR SONG...!
WHEEET WHEET
BUT I CANNOT
THEN LISTEN, INSTEAD, TO MY HUNTING-HORN...
THAROOOOOOOO
AH! DRINK I CAME FOR--
--NOW FOOD I FIND, AS WELL!
HAH! MY HORN'S NOTE HAS ALLURED SOMETHING LOVELY
WHAT A JOLLY COMPANION YOU WOULD MAKE!

AND SINCE YOU SEEM A BEAST WHO CAN USE ITS TONGUE-- PERHAPS YOU CAN TEACH ME SOMETHING, AFTER ALL.
HERE STANDS ONE WHO WOULD LEARN TO FEAR!
WILL YOU BE HIS TEACHER?
WHAT INSOLENCE IS THIS?
COURAGE OR INSOLENCE-- WHAT DOES IT MATTER?
IF YOU'LL NOT TEACH ME TO FEAR--
CHUNNK
--WITH MY SWORD, I WILL SLAY YOU!

HARRARG
PERHAPS IT'S BEST I CLOSE YOUR GULLET--
--FOR YOUR JAWS GAPE TOO WIDE!
THEY WERE NOT MADE FOR IDLE TALK--
--BUT THEY WILL SERVE WELL ENOUGH TO SWALLOW YOU!
AO-AO! FEROCIOUS CHURL! I'VE NO FANCY TO BE EATEN!
BETTER FAR, IT SEEMS TO ME, THAT WITHOUT DELAY--
WHAT A FINE SET OF TEETH YOU SHOW ME THERE!
HOW SWEETLY THEY SMILE IN YOUR DAINTY MOUTH!


YOU SHOULD DIE!
THUNK
SLISSSSS
BAH!
KTHOMP

COME, BOY, WITH ALL YOUR BOASTING!
BEWARE, OLD GROWLER--
THROKKKK
--THE BOASTER COMES!
KKHUNKT
LIE THERE--
--MURDEROUS BRUTE--

--"NEEDFUL'S" POINT HAS SPEEDED HOME!
WH-WHO ARE YOU, STRIPLING... AND WHO STIRRED UP YOUR CHILDISH SOUL TO SLAY FAFNER?
LITTLE DO I KNOW--NOT EVEN WHO I AM
KNOW, THEN... YOU HAVE KILLED A GIANT.. WHO MURDERED HIS BROTHER... FOR THE CURSED GOLD... WE GOT FROM THE SATEFUL GODS.
B-BE WARY, BOY... FOR HE WHO GOADED YOU ON... TO SLAY ME... TAKES THOUGHT HOW TO CAUSE... YOUR DEATH, NOW..
TAKE... HEEEEEEEED!
THE DEAD CAN TELL NO MORE TIDINGS.
BUT-- THIS HOT BLOOD THAT DRIPS FROM ME--
--IT BURNS LIKE FIRE!
AND WHEN I SUCK THE BLOOD FROM MY FINGERS, I ALMOST SEEM TO HEAR THE BIRDS SPEAKING TO ME!
IS THERE A SPELL, PERHAPS, IN THE BLOOD?
THAT ONE BIRD UP THERE-- HE SINGS TO ME!
HE! SIEGFRIED NOW OWNS ALL THE NIBELUNG HOARD--
--IF HE DARES DESCEND INTO THE DRAGON'S CAVE!

THE TARNHELM, IF HE BUT TAKE AND WEAR IT, WILL HELP HIM PERFORM DEEDS OF GREAT RENOWN--
--AND COULD HE BUT DISCOVER THE RING--IT WOULD MAKE HIM LORD OF ALL THE WORLD!
MY THANKS, FEATHERED ONE, FOR THE ADVICE!
GLADLY WILL I ACT ON IT!
THIS, THEN, IS SURELY THE NIBELUNG HOARD OF WHICH THE BIRD SANG--

--THIS, THE TARNHELM--
-- AND THIS, THE RING--
--THAT WILL MAKE ME RULER OF A WORLD!
MINE, DEAR BROTHER--
--HAS LUST FOR MY GOLD PROVOKED YOUR GREED?
ACCURSED ALBERICH! WHAT I HAVE SLAVED AND TOILED TO WIN, YOU'LL NOT TAKE FROM ME!
OH? WAS IT YOU WHO ROBBED THE RHINE OF GOLD FOR THE RING, OR WROUGHT ITS MAGICAL SPELL?
NO--BUT WHO MADE THE HELMET WHICH CHANGES ITS WEARER'S FORM?
YOU COULD DO SO ONLY BECAUSE THE RING FORCED YOU TO MASTER YOUR CRAFT!

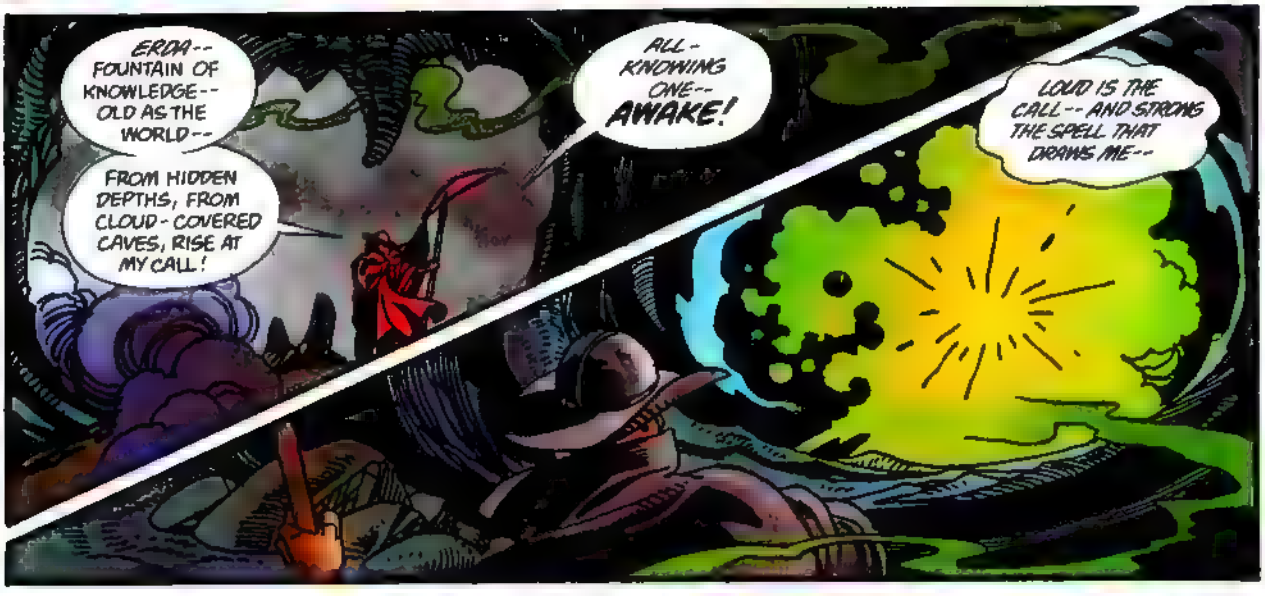
AND WHERE'S THE RING NOW? WHAT YOU LOST, I'LL TAKE AND KEEP!
HAH! THE BOY WHO WON IT IS ITS NEW LORD.
BUT I REARED HIM--AND NOW HE'LL PAY FOR MY PAINS!
STILL, YOU CAN KEEP BOTH RING AND GOLD.
JUST GIVE ME MY TARNHELM, AND WE'LL CALL THE SCALES BALANCED!
WHAT? IF YOU HAD THAT HEADPIECE, I COULD NEVER SLEEP IN SAFETY!
I'LL NOT RELINQUISH SO MUCH AS A NAIL!
THEN NEITHER RING NOR HELMET SHALL YOU HAVE--
--FOR HERE COMES SIEGFRIED, WHOSE KEEN-EDGED SWORD WILL MAKE SHORT WORK OF YOU!
CURSED LUCK! HE BEARS BOTH TARNHELM AND RING!
AND YET, TO ITS RIGHTFUL LORD IT MUST BE SURRENDERED-- SOONER OR LATER!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT USE THESE THINGS MAY BE.
I ONLY CHOSE THEM OUT OF THE HEAPED-UP HOARD BELOW BECAUSE OF... FRIENDLY ADVICE
WHY DON'T YOU JUST ASK HIM TO GIVE YOU THE RING, DEAR BROTHER? HAHAHAHA
IT'S I, NOT YOU, WHO'LL HAVE IT NOW!

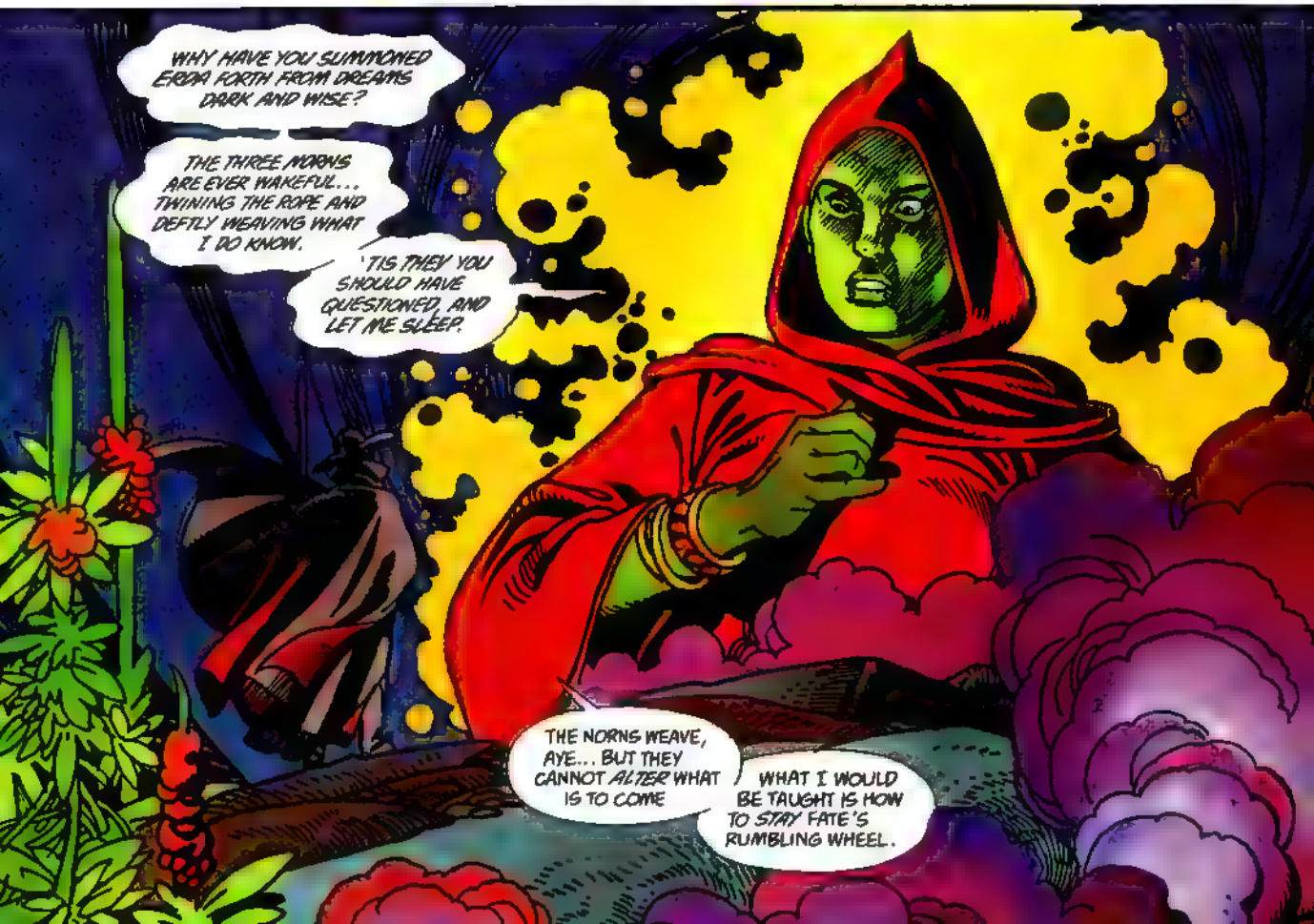
MEANWHILE, I'LL WEAR THEM TO BEAR WITNESS HOW I FOUGHT WITH FAFNER--
--YET COULD NOT LEARN TO BE AFRAID.
HEI!
NOW THAT SIEGFRIED HAS THE RING, YOU MUST LISTEN WELL TO MIME, THE FALSE!
HAVING TASTED THE BLOOD OF THE DRAGON, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE HIDDEN MEANINGS BEHIND THE DWARF'S LYING WORDS.
WELCOME, SIEGFRIED! HAS MY BOLD BOY BEEN TAUGHT HOW TO FEAR?
THAT TEACHER IS YET TO BE FOUND, MIME
AND THE ONE WHO BADE ME SLAY FAFNER I HATE FAR MORE THAN THE DRAGON HIMSELF.
HAVE PATIENCE! YOU WON'T HAVE TO LOOK AT ME FOR LONG.
IN DEATH WILL YOUR EYELIDS SOON BE SEALED, FOR YOUR USEFULNESS TO ME IS ENDED.
I'VE ALWAYS LOATHED YOU, YOUNGLING.
I REARED YOU ONLY TO GET, ONE DAY, FAFNER'S GOLD.
AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO KILL ME, IS IT?

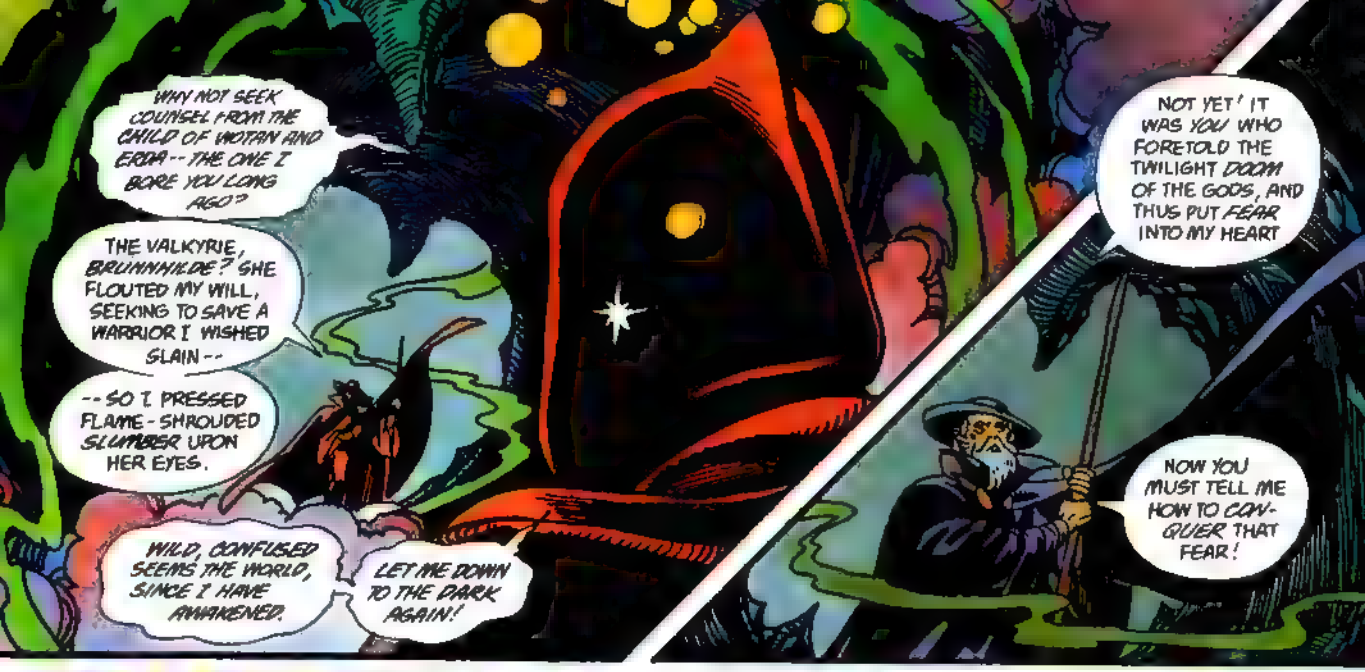
WHAT? I NEVER SAID THAT! YOU'RE FEVERISH FROM THE BATTLE
WHY, I'VE EVEN PREPARED THIS LIQUID TO SLAKE YOUR THIRST.
HAVE SOME--AND I'LL CUT OFF YOUR HEAD WHEN IT SWIFTLY PUT YOU TO SLEEP!
SO YOU'D SLAY ME--AND TAKE THE GOLD?
WH-WHY DO YOU INSIST ON MISTAKING WHAT I SAY?
I TAKE GREAT PAINS TO HIDE WHAT'S IN MY HEART--AND YOU, STUPID BOY, HEAR WORDS I ONLY THINK, NOT SAY!
EVEN IF I HATED YOU LESS, I'D NEVER DARE LET YOU LIVE, ONCE I'VE TAKEN THE RING.
HOW ELSE COULD I COME BY THE BOOTY THAT ALBERICH COVETS AS WELL?
NOW, MY WOLF-BEGOTTEN ONE--DRINK THIS, AND NEVER DRINK AGAIN!
LOATHSOME BABBLER--
AAAAAAAAA
--TASTE OF MY SWORD!

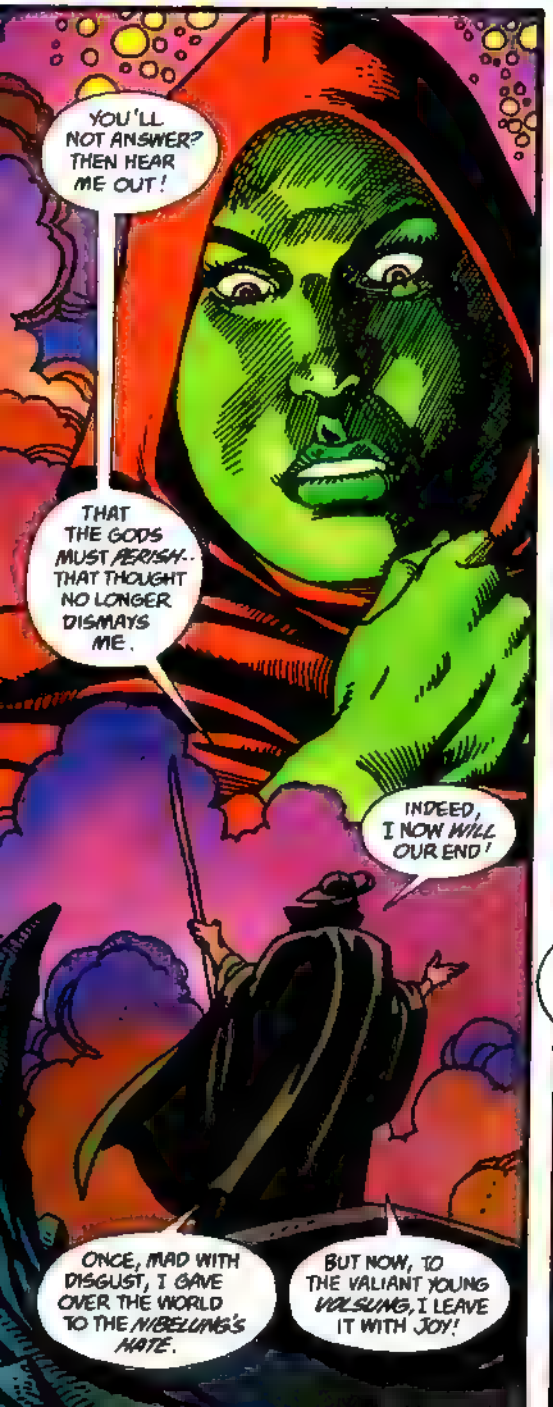
THUS DOES "NEEDFUL" PAY THE WAGES OF HATRED...
... FOR THIS WAS IT FORGED!
IN THE CAVERN, MIME, LIE ATOP THE HOARD YOU CRAVED.
WITH STEADFAST GUILE, YOU GAINED THE GOLD
NOW LET IT CRADLE ITS MASTER
THE DRAGON'S CORPSE, TOO, I GIVE YOU FOR A GUARDIAN . THAT THIEVES MAY NEVER ENTER AND STEAL.
SO BOTH OF YOU, AT LAST, SHALL FIND REST
BUT I-- I AM ALONE, WITHOUT BROTHER OR SISTER
MY MOTHER DIED.. MY FATHER FELL IN BATTLE... NEVER KNOWING THEIR SON.

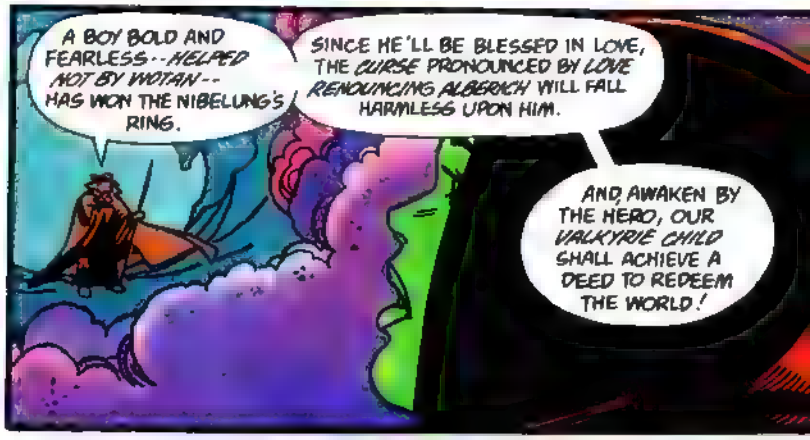
PRETTY WARBLER, I ASK YOU A BOON. OFTEN I'VE CALLED FOR A COMPANION, YET NONE HAS COME.
CAN YOU, WHOSE COUNSEL HAS BEEN SO WISE, CHOOSE A FIT MATE FOR ME?
HE!! NOW THAT SIEGFRIED'S SLAIN THE DECEITFUL DWARF, I KNOW FOR HIM A MOST GLORIOUS BRIDE.
BRÜNNHILDE SLEEPS AMID SKY-JUTTING ROCKS, HER CHAMBER RINGED BY FIRE.
SAY ON!
NO COWARD CAN BREAK THROUGH THOSE FLAMES, OR WAKEN THE MAID--
--BUT ONLY A HEART WITHOUT FEAR.
FOOL THAT I AM!
TO THINK THAT, JUST TODAY, I TRIED IN VAIN TO LEARN THE MEANING OF THAT WORD!
GUIDE ME, WINGED ONE, TO MY GOAL--
--TO THE FAIR BRÜNNHILDE!


ERDA-- FOUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE-- OLD AS THE WORLD--
FROM HIDDEN DEPTHS, FROM CLOUD-COVERED CAVES, RISE AT MY CALL!
ALL-KNOWING ONE-- AWAKE!
LOUD IS THE CALL-- AND STRONG THE SPELL THAT DRAWS ME--


WHY HAVE YOU SUMMONED ERDA FORTH FROM DREAMS DARK AND WISE?
THE THREE NORNS ARE EVER WAKEFUL... TWINING THE ROPE AND DEFTLY WEAVING WHAT I DO KNOW.
'TIS THEY YOU SHOULD HAVE QUESTIONED, AND LET ME SLEEP.
THE NORNS WEAVE, AYE... BUT THEY CANNOT *ALTER* WHAT IS TO COME
WHAT I WOULD BE TAUGHT IS HOW TO *STAY* FATE'S RUMBLING WHEEL.


WHY NOT SEEK COUNSEL FROM THE CHILD OF WOTAN AND ERDA -- THE ONE I BORE YOU LONG AGO?
THE VALKYRIE, BRUNNHILDE? SHE FLOUTED MY WILL, SEEKING TO SAVE A WARRIOR I WISHED SLAIN --
-- SO I PRESSED FLAME-SHROUDED SLUMBER UPON HER EYES.
WILD, CONFUSED SEEMS THE WORLD, SINCE I HAVE AWAKENED.
LET ME DOWN TO THE DARK AGAIN!
NOT YET! IT WAS YOU WHO FORETOLD THE TWILIGHT DOOM OF THE GODS, AND THUS PUT FEAR INTO MY HEART
NOW YOU MUST TELL ME HOW TO CONQUER THAT FEAR!


YOU'LL NOT ANSWER? THEN HEAR ME OUT!
THAT THE GODS MUST PERISH -- THAT THOUGHT NO LONGER DISMAYS ME.
INDEED, I NOW WILL OUR END!
ONCE, MAD WITH DISGUST, I GAVE OVER THE WORLD TO THE NIBELUNG'S HATE.
BUT NOW, TO THE VALIANT YOUNG VOLSUNG, I LEAVE IT WITH JOY!


A BOY BOLD AND FEARLESS -- HELPED NOT BY WOTAN -- HAS WON THE NIBELUNG'S RING.
SINCE HE'LL BE BLESSED IN LOVE, THE CURSE PRONOUNCED BY LOVE RENOUNCING ALBERICH WILL FALL HARMLESS UPON HIM.
AND AWAKEN BY THE HERO, OUR VALKYRIE CHILD SHALL ACHIEVE A DEED TO REDEEM THE WORLD!

WHATEVER THESE TWO MAY BRING TO PASS, I YIELD TO IT GLADLY!
DESCEND, THEN, ERDA, MOTHER OF FEAR AND THE WORLD'S SORROW --
DESCEND, AND LET YOUR WISDOM SLEEP FOREVER --

--FOR SIEGFRIED COMES!
WHEEEEEET
THE BIRDLING I FOLLOWED FORSAKES ME!
PRAY TELL ME, BOY--WHERE ARE YOU BOUND?
YOU THERE--I SEEK A ROCK SURROUNDED BY FIRE, WHERE SLEEPS A MAIDEN I WOULD WAKEN

WELL, OLD MAN? CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE IT IS OR NOT?
PATIENCE, YOUNG SIR. IF I SEEM OLD, ALL THE MORE NEED TO SHOW ME DUE HONOR.
AN ODD NOTION! MY WHOLE LIFE, ANOTHER OLD MAN BLOCKED MY PATH-- TILL I SWEPT HIM ASIDE.
BUT--WHY DO YOU WEAR SUCH A MONSTROUS HAT?
AND WHY DOES IT HANG SO, OVER YOUR FACE?
THAT IS THE WANDERER'S WAY--WHEN HE GOES AGAINST THE WIND
YET, YOU'VE ONLY ONE EYE BENEATH IT!
GIVE WAY, OR ELSE YOU'LL LOSE THE OTHER ONE!
I SEE, MY SON, WHERE YOU ARE BLIND.. HENCE, YOUR YOUTHFUL CONFIDENCE
AS FOR MY MISSING EYE-- YOU ARE LOOKING WITH IT, EVEN NOW, AT THE ONE STILL LEFT ME FOR SIGHT!
AHH! YOU MAKE ME LAUGH WITH YOUR FOOLISH BLATHERING!
CHILD, IF YOU KNEW WHO I AM, YOU WOULD SPARE ME YOUR SCOFFING
FROM ONE I HOLD SO DEAR, SUCH INSULTS ARE HARD TO ENDURE.
I WARN YOU-- ROUSE NOT MY WRATH, FOR IT WOULD BE THE RUIN OF US BOTH!
AND WHO ARE YOU TO THREATEN ME?
KNOW YOU THIS IT IS MY MIGHT WHICH BINDS THE MAIDEN IN CHAINS OF SLEEP.
HE WHO WOULD WAKE HER--RENDERS ME POWERLESS FOR ALL TIME!
LOOK ABOVE YOU, BOY--

A BURNING SEA ENCIRCLES THE MAID!
CLOUDS OF FIRE ROLLING--
TONGUES OF FLAME WRITHING, RAGING--
BACK, FOOLHARDY BOY, BEFORE THEY SEIZE AND DEVOUR YOU!
YOU STAND BACK!
FOR, WHERE THE BLAZE BURNS BRIGHTEST, I WILL FIND THE PROMISED BRÜNNHILDE!
NAY! THAT SWORD YOU WIELD, MY ETERNAL SPEAR SHATTERED LONG AGO.
UPON IT, YOUR BLADE SHALL BREAK ONCE MORE!
THEN-- I'VE FOUND MY FATHER'S SLAYER AT LAST--
--AND VENGEANCE, AS WELL!
MY SWORD WILL HEW YOUR SPEAR IN TWO!
CRACK
FARE ON, THEN!
I CANNOT PREVENT YOU.
SO! HIS SPEAR IN SPLINTERS, THE COWARD VANISHES!
NOW, RAPTUROUS FIRE--
-- GLORIOUS LIGHT--

--MY ROAD LIES BEFORE ME--
--OPEN AND SHINING!
INTO THE FLAMES, AND THROUGH THEM, I PLUNGE--
--TO WIN A BRIDE!
I'VE REACHED THE SUMMIT--
-- SUN-CARESSED HEIGHT!
BUT--WHAT RADIANT THING LIES YONDER?
IS IT THE GLEAM OF STEEL THAT DAZZLES ME SO?
AND SHALL THAT GLITTERING ARMOR BE MINE?

HAH!
I SEE NOW THAT IT COVERS--
--A MAN!

THE FELLOW'S BOSOM HEAVES-- STIRRED BY HIS BREATH.
PERHAPS I SHOULD--
THIS IS NO MAN!
MY HAND-- IT TREMBLES-- SHAKES!
TELL ME, O MY MOTHER--IS THIS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AFRAID?
HAS A WOMAN, LYING ASLEEP, TAUGHT ME AT LAST WHAT FEAR IS?
AND HOW DO I CONQUER THAT FEAR?
SO THAT I, MYSELF, MAY WAKE--I MUST AWAKEN THE SLEEPER!
NEW LIFE FROM THE SWEETEST OF LIPS WILL I SUCK...
...EVEN THOUGH I MAY DIE IN DOING SO!

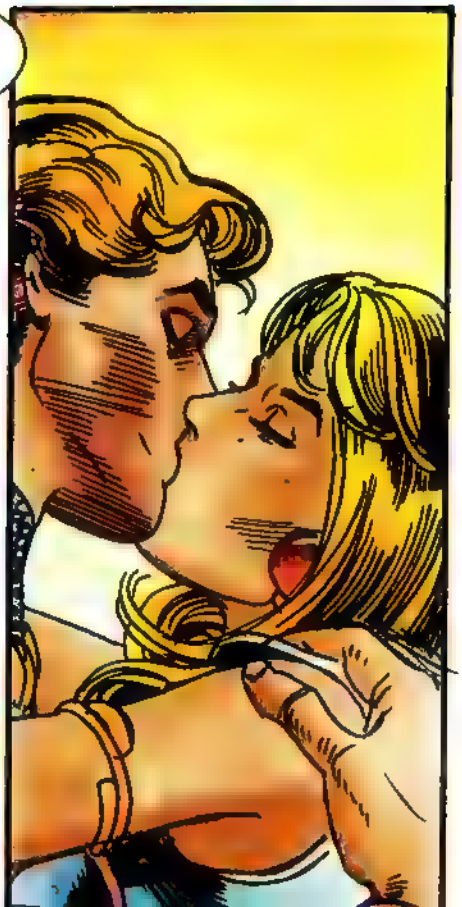
HAIL TO THEE, O SUN!
BRUNNHILDE...
HAIL, SHIMMERING DAY! LONG HAVE I SLEPT!
WHAT HERO HAS BROKEN MY SLEEP?
I FORCED MY WAY THROUGH THE FIRES... AND WOKE YOU.
I AM SIEGFRIED.
SIEGFRIED-- HERO MOST BLESSED!
MY SHIELD SHELTERED YOUR LIFE BEFORE THAT LIFE WAS YOURS!
MY LOVE WAS YOURS-- EVEN BEFORE YOU WERE BORN!
YOUR WORDS ARE RAPTURE TO ME... THOUGH I CANNOT FATHOM THEIR MEANING.
I KNOW ONLY THAT, SINCE I REMOVED YOUR SHIELD AND HELMET, THE FLAMES ROARING AROUND THIS ROCK NOW BURN WITHIN MY BREAST, AS WELL.
O BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN--
--QUENCH THAT RAGING FIRE!

HOLD! NO GOD EVER EMBRACED ME SO-- AND DYING WARRIORS GREETED ME WITH AWE, WHEN I RODE FORTH FROM VALHALLA.
BUT NOW--BITTER DISGRACE!--YOU HAVE TAKEN MY HELMET--MY SHIELD--
--AND I AM BRUNNHILDE NO MORE!
THEN, I'VE NOT YET TRULY BROKEN YOUR SLEEP.
AWAKE-- AND BE A WOMAN TO ME!
MY SENSES.. THEY REEL!
WISDOM THAT WAS MINE--WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?
LET YOUR NEW WISDOM DRAW ITS LIGHT FROM YOUR LOVE FOR ME!
I BEG YOU--DO NOT CONQUER ME, LAUGHING HERO, AS YOU CONQUERED THE FIRE
HAVE PITY ON ME--AND LEAVE ME UNTOUCHED!
I LOVE YOU.
WOULD ONLY THAT YOU LOVED ME!
BE MINE, BRUNNHILDE!
OH, MY SIEGFRIED..
... I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN YOURS!
IF SO, THEN BE MINE STILL--AND MY NEWFOUND FEAR WILL VANISH!
MY BLOOD SURGES LIKE A TORRENT TOWARD YOU--DON'T YOU FEEL IT?
DON'T YOU FEAR THIS WILD, LOVE-FRENZIED MAIDEN?
THE FEAR I NEVER LEARNED, BUT ONLY NOW, FROM YOU-- THAT FEAR, I'VE ALREADY FORGOTTEN!

OH, BRAVE, UNWITTING HERO -- LAUGHING, I LOVE YOU, AND WELCOME MY BLINDNESS!
LAUGHING, LET US GO DOWN WARD TO OUR DOOM!
AND LAUGHING, BRÜNNHILDE, YOU TRULY WAKEN TO ME AT LAST!
FAREWELL, THEN, VALHALLA'S STATELY WALLS -- IN THE DUST SO SOON LAID LOW!
NORNS -- REND ASUNDER YOUR ROPE OF RUNES!
TWILIGHT, STEAL DARKLY OVER THE GODS --
NIGHT OF THEIR DOWN-FALL, SWIFTLY DESCEND!
IT IS SIEGFRIED'S STAR THAT RISES FOR ME NOW!
NOW AND FOREVER, HE IS MY WEALTH -- MY WORLD --

-- LOVE EVER RADIANT --

-- LAUGHING DEATH!



NOW AND FOREVER, BRUNNHILDE LIKEWISE IS MY WEALTH--MY WORLD--
--LOVE EVER RADIANT--
--LAUGHING DEATH!

BOOK FOUR

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

AWAKE, MY SISTER NORNS!
WHAT LIGHT BURNS THERE, ON THE ROCK WHERE ONCE A VALKYRIE SLEPT?
DOES THE DAY ALREADY DAWN?
NAY--THAT IS ONLY THE CAPTIVE WRITHINGS OF LOKE THE FIRE-GOD
IT STILL IS NIGHT
LET US SPIN--AND SING WHILE WE SPIN!
YES.
FOR WELL, OR FOR ILL--I SING OF THINGS THAT WERE, AND THINGS THAT WILL BE--
--AND I WIND THE ROPE
ONCE, I WOVE AT THE WORLD-ASH TREE, WHEN FROM ITS HUGE TRUNK GREW THE BOUGHS OF A SACRED FOREST.
IN THE GREAT TREE'S SHADOW BUBBLED THE WELL OF WISDOM.
WOTAN, KING OF GODS, CAME ONE DAY TO DRINK AT IT...
...DESPERATE TO GAIN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS TO COME!

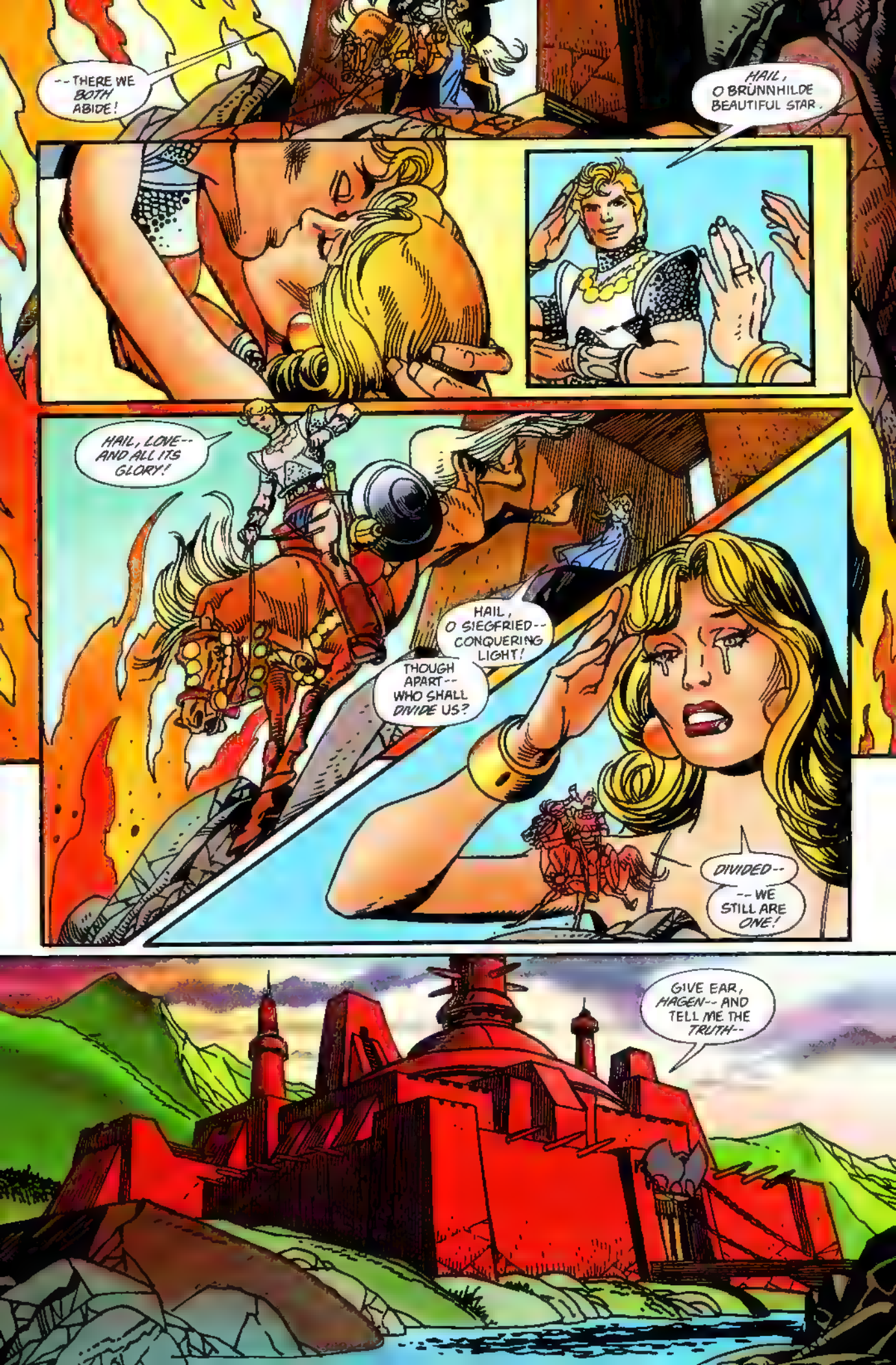
FOR THAT PRECIOUS DRINK, HE PAID DEARLY-- WITH THE LOSS OF AN EYE!
THEN, FROM THE WORLD-ASH HE BROKE OFF A HOLY BRANCH--
--FROM WHICH HE CUT AND SHAPED THE SHAFT OF A SPEAR
AS TIME FLOWED BY, THE FOREST DIED OF THE WOUND...
THE ANCIENT WELL WENT DRY..
AND NOW, NO MORE AT THE WORLD-ASH DO I WEAVE.
CATCH, O SISTER--
CAN YOU SING US WHY?
I CAN!
THE ALL-FATHER CARVED RUNES INTO THE SPEAR--
--SACRED WRITINGS, WHICH TOLD OF THE PACTS AND TREATIES ON WHICH HIS AUTHORITY WAS BASED.
WITH THESE ENGRAVED UPON ITS SHAFT, WOTAN RULED THE WORLD.
BUT THEN, A YOUNG HERO WITHOUT FEAR SHATTERED THE RUNE-SPEAR IN COMBAT--
--CLEAVING IN TWO ALL ITS ORNATELY CARVED TREATIES!

I HAVE TOSSED YOU THE ROPE NOW, SISTER.
CAN YOU TELL WHAT HAPPENED THEN?
AYE! BY WOTAN'S COMMAND, THE WELL OF WISDOM WAS SEALED...
...AND THE GODS HACKED TO PIECES THE WITHERED TRUNK OF THE WORLD-ASH
NOW WOTAN SPRAWLS WITHIN VALHALLA--THE FORTRESS HE TRICKED THE GIANTS INTO BUILDING FOR HIM--
--AND HIS OBEDIENT GODLINGS HAVE HEAPED HIGH THE GREAT TREE'S FRAGMENTS ABOUT IT.
WHEN THOSE SPLINTERED LOGS ARE SET ABLAZE, VALHALLA ITSELF SHALL BE CONSUMED--
--AND THE WAITING GODS SHALL WITNESS THE TWILIGHT OF THEIR AGE-LONG DAY!
IF YOU WISH TO KNOW MORE, THEN BEGIN WINDING THE ROPE ANEW, MY SISTER!
STRANGE! I-- I CAN SCARCE RECALL NOW THE HOLY PAST.
DO YOU KNOW HOW FIERY LOGE FARED?
DO YOU NOT REMEMBER, SISTER NORN?...

TAMED BY WOTAN'S SPEAR LOGE DID WHATEVER HIS LORD COMMANDED
BUT AT LAST, TRYING TO GAIN HIS FREEDOM, LOGE GNAWED AT THE SPEAR'S RUNES WITH HIS TEETH!
ANGERED, WOTAN CONFINED HIM TO YONDER PEAK--WHERE BRÜNNHILDE, AWAKENED NOW BUT A VALKYRIE NO LONGER, LIES WITH HER YOUNG HERO, SIEGFRIED.
SOON, WOTAN WILL DRIVE SPLINTERS OF HIS BROKEN SPEAR DEEP INTO LOGE'S BREAST--
--RAVENING FLAMES WILL SPRING FROM THE WOUND--
--AND THE FIREBRANDS WILL BE THROWN INTO THE MIDST OF THE PILED UP LOGS OF THE WORLD-ASH!
IF YOU WOULD KNOW WHEN THAT WILL BE--
--WIND. O SISTERS! WIND THE ROPE!
MY VISION--IT GROWS DARK!
I CANNOT FIND THE THREADS OF THE ROPE!
A TERRIBLE SIGHT SWIMS BEFORE MY EYES--
--THE RHINEGOLD, STOLEN BY THE DARK DWARF ALBERICH!
WHY CANNOT I SEE WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM?
THE ROCK! ITS SHARP EDGE IS CUTTING THE ROPE--ITS THREADS GROW TANGLED--FRAYED!
FROM WOE AND WRATH RISES THE NIBELUNG'S GOLDEN RING!
ALBERICH'S CURSE OF REVENGE RUTHLESSLY GNAWS AT THE STRANDS!
THEN PULL THE ROPE TIGHTER--STRAIGHTER--BEFORE--
--IT BREAKS!

IT--
--BREAKS
SO ENDS OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE THINGS THAT WILL BE!
THE WORLD WILL HEAR NO MORE OF US!
DESCEND, THEN, EVEN AS DAY BREAKS-- BACK TO OUR EARTH-MOTHER
TO ERDA, DESCEND!
I--MUST GO, BRÜNNHILDE
MY LOVE WOULD BE A POOR THING, SIEGFRIED, IF I KEPT YOU FROM GOING ON TO NEW GLORY
ALL THE THINGS THE GODS HAVE TOLD ME, I HAVE TAUGHT TO YOU
TO YOU, ALSO, I HAVE GIVEN MY MAIDEN'S VIRTUE.
I ONLY FEAR I WAS TOO MEAGRE A REWARD FOR YOUR VALOR

THAT YOU LIVE FOR ME IS THE ONLY GIFT I CRAVE--
--THE ONLY THING I NEED REMEMBER!
IF YOU TRULY LOVE ME, THINK OF YOURSELF ALONE--AND OF YOUR GREAT DEEDS TO COME!
REMEMBER THE RAGING FIRE YOU BRAVED--
--THAT I MIGHT CONQUER BRUNNHILDE!
THINK, TOO, OF THE ARMORED MAID YOU FOUND SLEEPING HERE--
--WHOM I AWAKENED!
IF OUR VOWS--OUR LOVE--OUR TRUST--UNITE US--
--THEN BRUNNHILDE WILL BURN FOREVER IN YOUR BREAST!
TAKE THIS RING OF MINE, WHICH I TOOK FROM A DRAGON WHICH GUARDED IT
KEEP ITS GOLD, AND ITS MIGHT, AS A PLEDGE OF MY ETERNAL LOVE.
I SHALL VALUE IT--ABOVE ALL ELSE!
AND FOR THE RING, TAKE MY HORSE, GRANE. WHO ONCE GALLOPED THROUGH THE AIR WITH ME.
THOUGH HE LOST HIS MAGIC WHEN I LOST MINE, HE WILL PROVE A GALLANT MOUNT FOR YOU!
NO LONGER AM I SIEGFRIED--BUT ONLY BRÜNNHILDE'S GOOD ARM!
IF ONLY BRÜNNHILDE WERE YOUR SOUL, AS WELL!
THEN ALL MY VICTORIES WILL BE YOURS--RIDING UPON YOUR STEED, AND SHELTERED BY YOUR ARMOR.
WHERE I AM--


--THERE WE BOTH ABIDE!
HAIL, O BRÜNNHILDE BEAUTIFUL STAR.
HAIL, LOVE-- AND ALL ITS GLORY!
HAIL, O SIEGFRIED-- CONQUERING LIGHT!
THOUGH APART-- WHO SHALL DIVIDE US?
DIVIDED--
--WE STILL ARE ONE!
GIVE EAR, HAGEN-- AND TELL ME THE TRUTH--

--IS MY FAME ON THE RIVER RHINE WORTHY OF GIBICH'S SON?
LORD GUNTHER-- I ENVY YOU YOUR FAME AND GLORY
BUT THEN, YOUR GREAT RENOWN WAS FORETOLD TO ME BY GRIMHILDE, SHE WHO WAS MOTHER TO US BOTH!
TRUE, I RULE-- BECAUSE I WAS FIRST-BORN--BUT WISDOM IS YOURS, MY HALF-BROTHER
I ENVY YOU--SO YOU'VE NO NEED TO ENVY ME
IT IS TRUE--I DO KNOW OF PRECIOUS TREASURES YOU HAVE NOT YET WON!
TELL ME OF THEM, HAGEN-- OR I WITHDRAW MY PRAISE!
VERY WELL. IN THE FULL RIPENESS OF SUMMER BLOOMS THE GIBICHUNG STOCK.
YET YOU, GUNTHER, ARE STILL UNWIVED--
--AND YOUR SISTER GUTRINE, THERE BESIDE YOU, IS LIKEWISE STILL UNWED!
SO? WHOM CAN I MARRY, THAT WOULD ADD TO THE LUSTRE OF THE THE GIBICHUNG NAME?

ONE I KNOW OF--NONE NOBLER IN ALL THE WORLD!
FAIR BRÜNNHILDE DWELLS ON SOARING ROCKS, ENCIRCLED BY FIRE
HE WHO'D WIN HER MUST BREAK THROUGH THAT FLAME
AND YOU THINK MY STRENGTH IS SUFFICIENT FOR THAT TASK?
ALAS, GUNTHER, THAT DEED IS RESERVED FOR THE VOLSUNG, SIEGFRIED--HE WHO SLEW A DRAGON TO WIN THE GOLD OF THE NIBELUNG.
WHAT? THEY SAY THAT TREASURE HOARD IS PRICELESS!
AYE! THE MAN WHO COULD USE 'TS SPELL--WERE LORD OF THE WORLD, FOREVERMORE!
SIEGMUND AND SIEGLINDA--A TWIN-BORN PAIR WHOM FATE TURNED TO LOVERS--WERE HIS STAR-CROSSED PARENTS..
...AND 'TIS HE THAT YOU SHOULD WED, DEAR GUTRUNE!
I? YOU MOCK ME, HAGEN!
WHAT ARTS HAVE I TO WIN THE GREATEST HERO IN ALL THE WORLD?
REMEMBER THE HERB-POTION LOCKED AWAY IN YOUR JEWEL CHEST, MY LADY?
IF SIEGFRIED DRANK OF IT, HE'D FORGET ANY WOMAN HE'D EVER SEEN BEFORE!
THEN, GUNTHER, WITH HIS HEART A PRISONER TO OUR SISTER, YOU'VE ONLY TO ASK HIM--
--AND HE WILL GLADLY GO WIN YOUR FIRE-HEMMED BRIDE FOR YOU!
WELL? WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY PLAN?
MAY OUR MOTHER BE PRAISED, WHO GAVE US YOU FOR A HALF-BROTHER!
I MUST SEE THIS SIEGFRIED!
BUT HOW CAN HE BE FOUND, HAGEN?

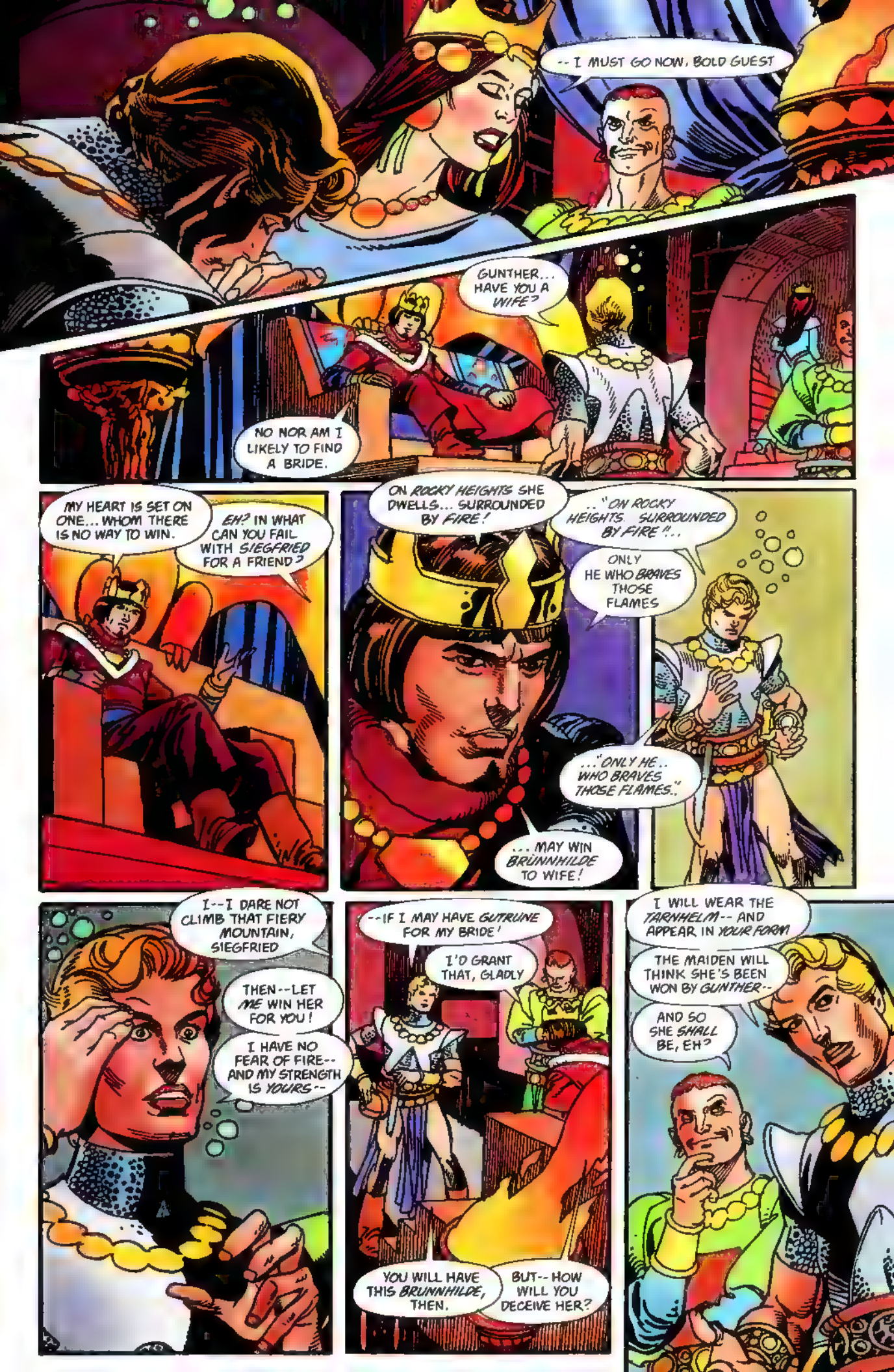
THE WORLD HAS BECOME HIS FOREST, AS HE JOYOUSLY HUNTS FOR ADVENTURE
IN ITS PURSUIT HE HAS REACHED YOUR REALM HERE ON THE RHINE..
...AND INDEED, HE IS EVEN NOW OUTSIDE YOUR VERY WALLS!
'TIS BEST WE DO NOT LET HIM PASS BY, EH?
HO, THE CASTLE!
I SEEK THE SON OF GIBICH!
HAIL, SIEGFRIED, BOLDEST OF HEROES!
INTO THIS STRONGHOLD WE INVITE YOU!

WHICH OF YOU IS GUNTHER, SON OF GIBICH?
I AM THE ONE YOU SEEK
YOUR FAME HAS REACHED ME FAR OFF ALONG THE RHINE.
NOW FIGHT WITH ME--OR ELSE BE MY FRIEND.
FRIEND, THEN! YOU ARE WELCOME HERE
I AM GLAD BUT--HOW DID YOUR MAN KNOW MY NAME?
I GUESSED FROM WHO YOU MUST BE. FROM YOUR NOBLE BEARING.
COME INSIDE, AND GREET MY FATHER'S HALL IN GLADNESS.
MY KINGDOM--MY PEOPLE--ALL YOU MAY BEHOLD HERE, FROM THIS MOMENT FORWARD--
--TREAT AS YOUR OWN!

MY SWORD AND MYSELF DO I OFFER, IN RETURN.
FOR MY OWN BODY IS ALL MY WEALTH I HAVE TO GIVE--AND, AS I LIVE, IT GROWS EVER LESS
OH? YET, RUMORS NAME YOU LORD OF THE NIBELUNG DWARF'S TREASURE
THE HOARD? I ALMOST FORGOT ABOUT IT--
--SO LIGHTLY DO I PRIZE ITS WORTH.
I LEFT IT LYING IN A CAVERN, WHERE A DRAGON ONCE STOOD WATCH
AND YOU TOOK NOTHING AT ALL FROM SUCH A TREASURE?
ONLY ONE THING.
...THIS HELMET, WHOSE VALUE I DO NOT EVEN KNOW.
WHY, 'TIS THE LEGENDARY TARNHELM--
--THE CROWNING GEM OF THE NIBELUNG'S ART!

WORN ON YOUR HEAD, IT WILL CHANGE YOUR SHAPE TO WHATEVER YOU WILL!
IF YOU WISH TO BE BORNE AFAR -- IN A FLASH, GO! YOU WILL BE THERE!
AND YOU TOOK, NOTHING ELSE?
WELL... THERE WAS A RING
AND YOU'RE -- KEEPING IT SAFE?
A WOMAN MOST WONDEROUS IS.
NAY, SIEGFRIED, LET US NOT BARTER
ALL I HAVE IS BUT A POOR BAUBLE, MATCHED AGAINST YOUR TREASURE
I WILL SERVE YOU GLADLY, WITHOUT HOPE OF REWARD
WELCOME, O GUEST, TO GIBICH'S HOUSE
'TIS HIS DAUGHTER GIVES YOU TO DRINK
IF ALL WERE FORGOTTEN THAT YOU TOLD ME, ONE LESSON I WOULD NEVER FORGET
AND SO THIS FIRST DRAUGHT -- WITH LOVE UNDYING --
-- BRUNNHILDE, I DRINK TO THEE!

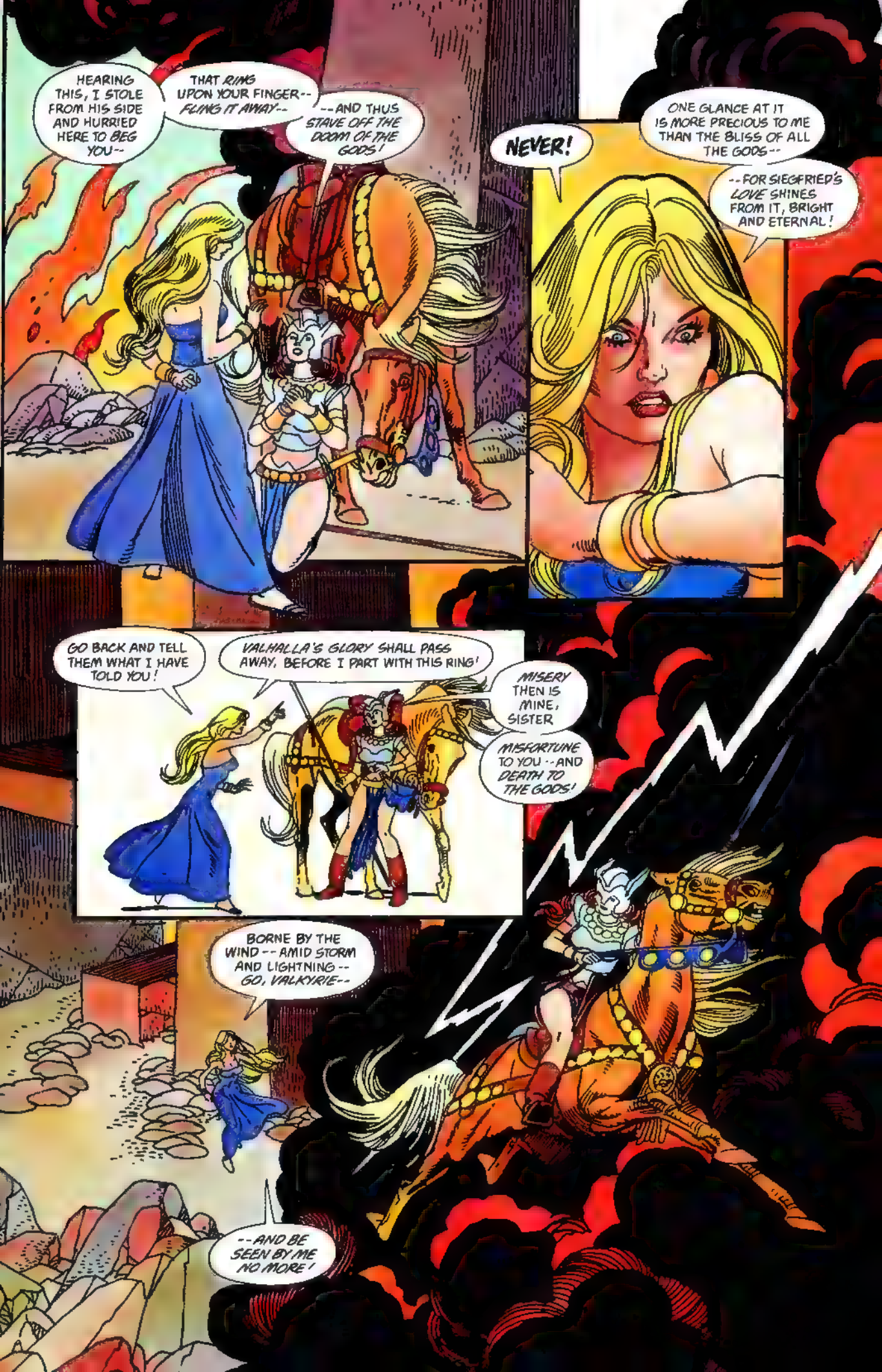
BUT--WHO-WHO ARE YOU, LOVELY MAID--
--YOU, WHO SCORCH AND BLIND ME WITH YOUR EYES, AND THEN AVERT YOUR OWN?
THOSE EYES KINDLE MY HEART... AND MY BLOOD FLOWS IN TORRENTS OF DEVOURING FIRE!
GUNTHER--WHAT NAME IS YOUR SISTER'S?
GUTRUNE
A NAME WHICH MEANS --"GOOD RUNES"
AND GOOD RUNES DO I READ IN HER EYES!
WHEN I VOWED TO SERVE YOUR BROTHER, MY LADY, HIS PRIDE SCORNED MY OFFER
WERE I TO VOW THE SAME TO YOU--
--WOULD YOU BE AS PROUD AS ME?
WHY--I--


-- I MUST GO NOW, BOLD GUEST
GUNTHER... HAVE YOU A WIFE?
NO NOR AM I LIKELY TO FIND A BRIDE.
MY HEART IS SET ON ONE... WHOM THERE IS NO WAY TO WIN.
EH? IN WHAT CAN YOU FAIL WITH SIEGFRIED FOR A FRIEND?
ON ROCKY HEIGHTS SHE DWELLS... SURROUNDED BY FIRE!
..."ON ROCKY HEIGHTS SURROUNDED BY FIRE"...
ONLY HE WHO BRAVES THOSE FLAMES
..."ONLY HE.. WHO BRAVES THOSE FLAMES.."
... MAY WIN BRUNNHILDE TO WIFE!
I--I DARE NOT CLIMB THAT FIERY MOUNTAIN, SIEGFRIED
THEN--LET ME WIN HER FOR YOU!
I HAVE NO FEAR OF FIRE-- AND MY STRENGTH IS YOURS--
--IF I MAY HAVE GUTRUNE FOR MY BRIDE!
I'D GRANT THAT, GLADLY
YOU WILL HAVE THIS BRUNNHILDE, THEN.
BUT-- HOW WILL YOU DECEIVE HER?
I WILL WEAR THE TARNHELM-- AND APPEAR IN YOUR FORM
THE MAIDEN WILL THINK SHE'S BEEN WON BY GUNTHER--
AND SO SHE SHALL BE, EH?

THEN LET THE BLOOD-OATH NOW BE SWORN!
"QUICKENING BLOOD OF BLOSSOMING LIFE-
"-BRAVELY MIXED IN BROTHERLY LOVE--
"--IF BROKEN THIS BOND, OR FAITH-LESS THE FRIEND -LET HE WHO BREAKS IT PAY THE WAGE OF TREACHERY!"
SEALED BE OUR BOND!
PLEDGED BE OUR FAITH!
HAGEN, WHY DID YOU NOT JOIN IN THE OATH?
MY BLOOD IS NOT SO PURE OR NOBLE AS YOURS
SO I HOLD ALOOF FROM HOT BLOODED BONDS
LET THAT UNHAPPY CHURL BE, SIEGFRIED
WILL YOU REST A WHILE, BEFORE WE BEGIN OUR QUEST?
NO I AM EAGER THAT WE SHOULD DEPART--
--THE SOONER THAT I MAY RETURN TO GUTRUNE.

SO HERE I STAY-- TO WATCH OVER THE HOUSE OF GIBICH'S SON--
- WHILE SIEGFRIED RIDES FORTH TO GAIN FOR GUNTHER THE WOMAN HE ONCE LOVED
AND WITH HER, HE WILL BRING ME--THE RING!
THE GODS' OWN SPEED, MERRY COMPANIONS!
BASE-BORN THOUGH YOU BOTH MAY DEEM ME -
--YOU BOTH WILL LIVE TO SERVE THE SON OF ALBERICH THE NIBELUNG!
I HEAR A SOUND - OLD, FAMILIAR--!
-- A HORSE COMES RACING SWIFTLY THROUGH THE AIR, TOWARD THIS ROCK
WHO IS IT THAT'S SOUGHT ME OUT HERE IN MY SOLITUDE?

PERHAPS MY SIEGFRIED RETURNS?
BRÜNNHILDE! IF YOU SLEEP, AWAKEN!
WALTRAUTE-- MY SISTER!
HAVE YOU BROKEN THE WAR FATHER'S BAN FOR MY SAKE?
OR-- HAS WOTAN AT LAST SOFTENED TOWARD HIS ONCE-FAVORED CHILD?
FOR WHEN I TRIED IN VAIN TO SHIELD SIEGMUND FROM DEATH, I ONLY FULFILLED OUR FATHER'S HIDDEN DESIRE
WOTAN DOOMED ME TO SERVE WHATEVER MAN AWOKE ME -- YET HIS RING OF FIRE KEEPS OUT ALL COWARDS
THUS WAS CURSE CHANGED TO BLESSING- FOR A HERO WITHOUT EQUAL HAS WON ME!
HAVE YOU COME HERE TO SHARE IN MY HAPPINESS?
BUT--NO! I SEE NOW THAT YOU QUAKE WITH TERROR
IS IT WOTAN'S ANGER YOU FEAR?
IF ONLY IT WERE-- MY FEAR MIGHT SOON END!
SINCE YOUR DEPARTURE, WOTAN NO LONGER SENDS US VALKYRIES TO CHOOSE AMONG SLAIN WARRIORS
INSTEAD HE WENT WANDERING THE WORLD -AND RETURNED WITH HIS RUNESPEAR SHATTERED
HE MERELY SENDS HIS TWIN RAVENS FORTH, TO BRING HIM NEWS.
NO MORE DOES HE EAT OF THE APPLES OF YOUTH.
BUT HE HAS SAID, BRÜNNHILDE, THAT IF ONLY YOU WOULD RESTORE TO THE RHINEMAIDENS THEIR GOLDEN RING -- YOU WOULD FREE BOTH GODS AND WORLD FROM A TERRIBLE CURSE!
MY RING?


HEARING THIS, I STOLE FROM HIS SIDE AND HURRIED HERE TO BEG YOU--
THAT RING UPON YOUR FINGER-- FLING IT AWAY--
--AND THUS STAVE OFF THE DOOM OF THE GODS!
NEVER!
ONE GLANCE AT IT IS MORE PRECIOUS TO ME THAN THE BLISS OF ALL THE GODS--
--FOR SIEGFRIED'S LOVE SHINES FROM IT, BRIGHT AND ETERNAL!
GO BACK AND TELL THEM WHAT I HAVE TOLD YOU!
VALHALLA'S GLORY SHALL PASS AWAY, BEFORE I PART WITH THIS RING!
MISERY THEN IS MINE, SISTER
MISFORTUNE TO YOU--AND DEATH TO THE GODS!
BORNE BY THE WIND--AMID STORM AND LIGHTNING-- GO, VALKYRIE--
--AND BE SEEN BY ME NO MORE!

BUT-- HOLD!
SOMEONE STALKS THROUGH THE WALL OF FLAME!
SIEGFRIED?
NO! WH-WHAT MAN ARE YOU?
A SUITOR WHOM YOUR FIRE DID NOT DISMAY-- HERE TO TAKE YOU FOR MY WIFE!
A HERO WHO WILL TAME YOUR PRIDE BY FORCE!
ARE YOU A MORTAL-- OR ARE YOU ONE OF HELLA'S DARK HOST?
IT IS GUNTHER, SON OF GIBICH, YOU MUST FOLLOW FROM THIS PLACE
WOTAN--YOU MOST MERCILESS GOD--NOW AT LAST I SEE HOW YOUR ANGER TRULY WORKS!
COME! NIGHT IS FALLING
YOU MUST RECEIVE YOUR HUSBAND!
STAND BACK! WHILE THIS RING SHIELDS ME-- STRENGTHENS ME--YOU CANNOT FORCE ME TO SHAME!
CAN I NOT?
RATHER, WIFE IT SHALL MAKE YOU TO GUNTHER.

WITH THIS RING, YOU SHALL BE WED TO ME!...
THAT MUST BE MINE, I HAVE LEARNED FROM YOUR OWN LIPS
NOW, BRUNNHILDE-- GUNTHER'S BRIDE--
--LEAD ME THE WAY TO YOUR CHAMBER!
O, WOMAN UNDONE--
--WHERE NOW IS YOUR DEFENSE?
"NEEDFUL," MY SWORD--YOU SHALL WITNESS THAT SIEGFRIED HAS BEEN A CHASTE SUITOR--
--AYE, AND LOYAL TO MY BROTHER-IN-BLOOD, GUNTHER!
YOU SHALL LIE BETWEEN ME AND HIS BRIDE!

HAGEN...
HAGEN, MY SON ARE YOU ASLEEP?
DO YOU NOT HEAR ME?
...I HEAR, ALBERICH
...NIBELUNG
..FATHER
THE HATRED IN WHICH I REARED YOU BEARS FRUIT AT LAST!
WOTAN, WHO STOLE MY RING, HAS BEEN VANQUISHED BY ONE OF HIS OWN MORTAL SONS
WITH HIS WHOLE "IMMORTAL" RACE, HE AWAITS IN ANGUISH HIS DOWNFALL!
WHEN THE GODS ARE TOPPLED... WHO WILL INHERIT THE WORLD?
I--AND YOU--IF YOU SHARE MY HATE AND WRATH!
DO NOT DELAY, MY SON!
AIM FOR THE RING!
IF SIEGFRIED WERE TO RESTORE IT TO THE RHINE-MAIDENS, FROM WHOM I FIRST TOOK THE GOLD--OUR DREAMS OF POWER WOULD FADE FOREVER!
SWEAR TO ME YOU WILL WIN THE RING, MY SON!
SWEAR TO ME!

TO MYSELF I SWEAR..
...SO LET YOUR MIND REST EASY.
BE TRUE, HAGEN!
TRUSTED SON--BE TRUE--
--TO MEEEEEEE!!
HAGEN...
NOW WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WEARY MAN--WHERE IS YOUR WELCOME?
SIEGFRIED? WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM?
WHEN I CALLED TO YOU BEFORE, I STOOD ON BRUNNHILDE'S ROCK, IN GUNTHER'S GUISE
THEN, WITH A WISH UPON THE TARNHELM, I WAS HERE, AND MYSELF AGAIN
THE OTHERS ARE COMING..MORE SLOWLY

GUTRUNE! MAKE HASTE! SIEGFRIED IS RETURNED!
I HAVE JOYFUL NEWS, GIRL...
THIS DAY, I HAVE WON YOU FOR WIFE!
THEN YOU GAINED FOR MY BROTHER THE ONE CALLED BRUNNHILDE?
AND SHE THOUGHT YOU WERE HE?
AYE. THE TARNHELM SAW TO THAT, AS HAGEN FORETOLD.
WHEN THE DAY DAWNED, I GAVE GUNTHER MY PLACE, WITHOUT HER KNOWLEDGE--
-- AND WISHED MYSELF HERE, AT YOUR SIDE.
SUCH IS YOUR MIGHT, SIEGFRIED, I--I AM HALF AFRAID OF YOU!
HOY-HO, YOU GIBICH VASSALS!
COME WITHOUT DELAY!
YOUR LORD GUNTHER BRINGS HOME A WIFE!
WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE US DO, HAGEN?
PREPARE A FEAST! OXEN FOR WOTAN-- A BOAR FOR FROH--A HE-GOAT FOR DONNER--
--AND SHEEP FOR FAIR FRICKA, THAT SHE MAY SMILE UPON THE MARRIAGE!
THEY COME!

TO YOUR NEW LADY, VASSALS, BE LOYAL AND TRUE!
IF ANY DO HER WRONG--BE SWIFT TO AVENGE HER!
WELCOME, LORD GUNTHER!
HEALTH TO THEE AND THY BRIDE!
HAIL, HAPPY GIBICHUNGS!
NO MAN EVER WON A NOBLER WOMAN, MY VASSALS.
NOW, TO FAME UNMATCHED SHALL RISE THE NAME OF THE GIBICHUNGS!
AND IT IS GOOD TO SEE MY BELOVED HERO AND MY FAIR SISTER, STANDING SIDE BY SIDE... ANOTHER JOYOUS PAIR..
...BRÜNNHILDE AND GUNTHER...
...GUTRUNE AND SIEGFRIED!
--HERE?
SIEGFRIED--
AND--GUTRUNE--?
GUNTHER'S GENTLE SISTER...
...PLEDGED TO ME, EVEN AS YOU ARE TO HIM

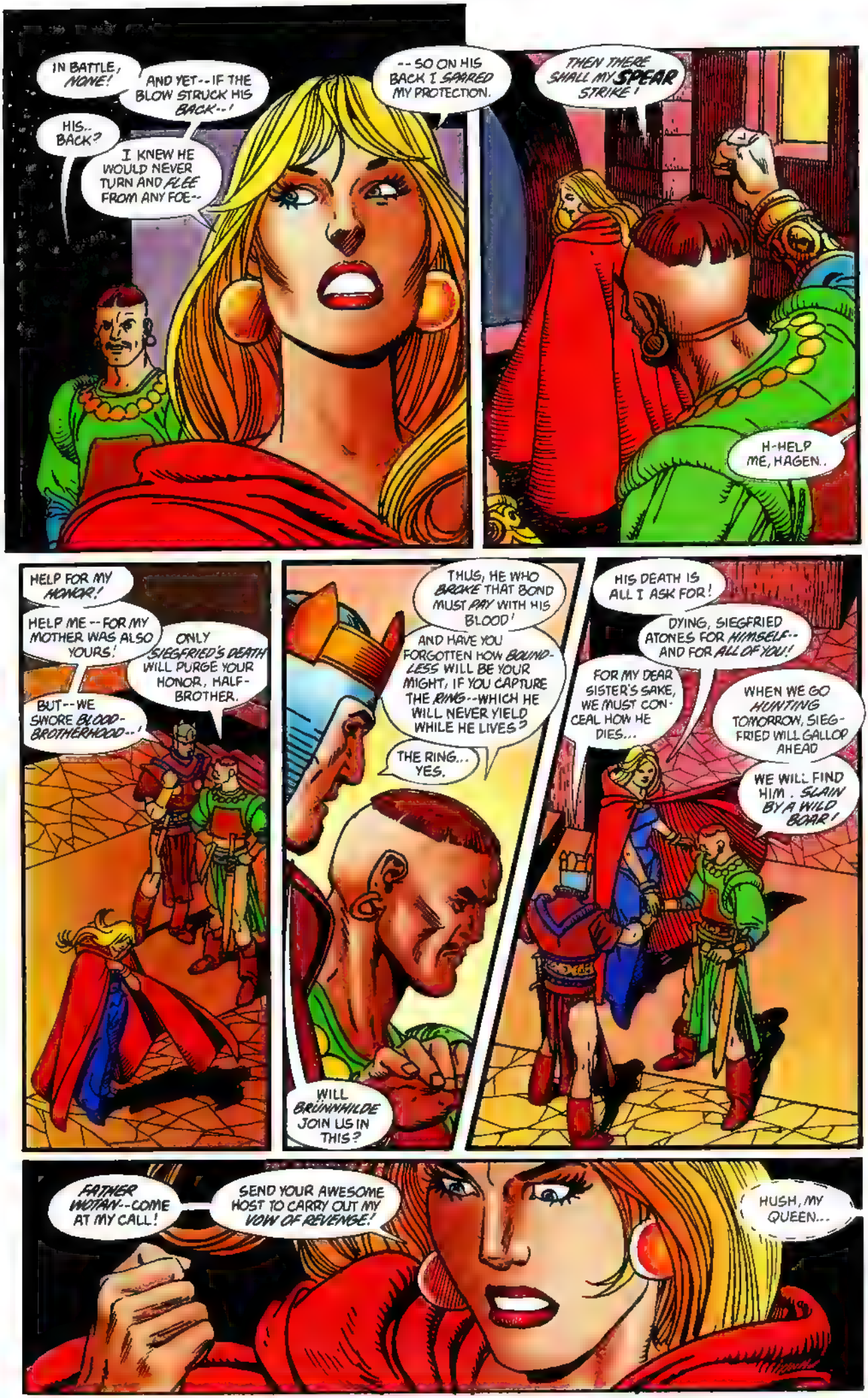
I...?
...GUNTHER..?
YOU ARE LYING!
THE LIGHT... FADES FROM MY EYES...
SIEGFRIED-- DON'T YOU KNOW ME?
GUNTHER--
YOUR BRIDE IS SWOONING!
WAKE, BRÜNNHILDE..
HERE STANDS YOUR HUSBAND.
THE... RING...
...THE RING UPON HIS HAND...
HE...
...SIEGFRIED?
HAVE YOU A TALE TO TELL US, MY LADY?

THAT RING-- IT IS NOT YOURS!
IT WAS TAKEN BY FORCE FROM ME--BY THAT MAN THERE-- GUNTHER!
HOW DID YOU COME BY IT?
I... IT IS HARD .. TO RECALL...
BUT NO MAN GAVE IT TO ME..
...NOR DID I WREST IT FROM A WOMAN'S GRASP.
THIS... RING
NOW I REMEMBER!
IT WAS THE BOOTY WON WHEN I SLEW A RAGING DRAGON!
BRÜNNHILDE, MY QUEEN-- DO YOU KNOW THAT RING WELL?
IF IT WAS WON BY GUNTHER, THEN SIEGFRIED GOT IT BY GUILE.
IF SO, THE TRAITOR MUST PAY FOR HIS THEFT!
I HAVE BEEN DECEIVED!
O GODS--IF I MUST BEAR THIS SHAME, TEACH ME A VENGEANCE SUCH AS NEVER WAS SWORN!
BRÜNNHILDE--DEAR BRIDE--CALM YOURSELF--!
AWAY, BETRAYER!

HEARKEN, ALL OF YOU! NOT GUNTHER, BUT SIEGFRIED, WON ME TO WIFE--
--FORCED DELIGHT AND LOVE FROM ME!
SIEGFRIED?
GUTRUNE'S LORD?
DO YOU SO LIGHTLY HOLD YOUR HONOR, WOMAN, THAT I MUST BECOME ITS DEFENDER?
YOU KNOW MY BLADE LAY BETWEEN US ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT...
..GUARDING MY OATH OF BLOOD-BROTHERHOOD WITH GUNTHER
SIEGFRIED SHOW THAT YOU WERE NOT FALSE TO ME-- OR TO YOUR BLOOD-OATH.
PROVE THAT BRUNNHILDE'S WORD IS WORTHLESS!
WHICH OF YOU OFFERS HIS SWORD FOR A NEW OATH?
SWEAR THE OATH-- UPON THE POINT OF MY SPEAR!
IT WILL SURELY AVENGE BAD FAITH
SHINING STEEL-- WEAPON MOST HOLY-- WITNESS MY OATH, SWORN FOREVER!
SPEAR-POINT, MARK YOU MY WORDS!

IF WEAPON MUST PIERCE ME, LET YOURS BE THE BLOW--IF WHAT BRUNNHILDE HAS SAID IS TRUE--
--AND I BROKE FAITH WITH MY FRIEND!
SHINING STEEL--
WEAPON MOST HOLY--
--WITNESS MY OATH, LIKEWISE SWORN FOREVER!
LET YOUR SHARPNESS BE BLESSED BY ME, THAT IT MAY SLAY THIS BREAKER OF OATHS--
--FOR FALSE IS EVERYTHING HE HAS SWORN!
HELP US, DONNER, GOD OF STORM!
LET YOUR ROARING THUNDER SILENCE THIS TERRIBLE SHAME!
GUNTHER.. LET THIS WOMAN WHO SLANDERS YOUR NAME REST A WHILE
I FEAR THE TARNHELM ONLY HALF-HID MY FACE FROM HER
STILL, THE WRATH OF WOMAN SWIFTLY FADES
SHE'LL YET BE THANKFUL I WON HER FOR YOU
YOU MEN--FOLLOW ME WITH MIRTH TO THE FEAST!
YOU WOMEN--HELP GAILY WITH THE WEDDING TO COME!
IN HALL AND GROVE, THIS DAY, THERE SHALL BE NONE MORE MERRY THAN I--

--I, WHOM LOVE HAS TRULY BLESSED WITH VIRTUOUS GUTRUNE!
WHAT WIZARD'S SPELL HAS WORKED THIS WOE?
I GAVE SIEGFRIED ALL MY RUNE-WISDOM, AND NOW I AM MERELY HIS BOOTY-- TO BE LIGHTLY GIVEN TO ANOTHER!
WILL NO ONE LEND A SWORD WITH WHICH I MAY SEVER MY UN-SEEN BONDS?
LEAVE THAT TO HAGEN, WRONGED ONE.
I WILL AVENGE YOU ON SIEGFRIED!
YOU?
A SINGLE FLASH OF HIS EYE AND ITS LIGHTNING-- AND YOUR COURAGE WOULD DESERT YOU!
BUT HIS OATH-LIES... THEY MAKE HIM VULNERABLE TO MY SPEAR!
TRUTH -- FALSEHOOD-- WHAT MATTER MERE WORDS?
SEEK FOR SOME-THING STRONGER, IF YOU WOULD WITH-STAND SUCH POWER AS HIS!
I KNOW WELL OF SIEGFRIED'S PROWESS IN BATTLE.
THEN WHISPER TO ME SOME SECRET WAY TO SPEED HIM TO HIS DOOM!
I TAUGHT HIM ALL THE RUNIC ARTS I KNOW TO PRESERVE HIS BODY FROM HARM.
WITHOUT HIS KNOWING IT, HE BEARS A CHARMED LIFE, AND WALKS ALL WRAPPED ABOUT WITH PROTECTING SPELLS.
THEN-- NO WEAPON FORGED COULD HARM HIM?


IN BATTLE, NONE!
AND YET--IF THE BLOW STRUCK HIS BACK--!
HIS.. BACK?
I KNEW HE WOULD NEVER TURN AND FLEE FROM ANY FOE--
--SO ON HIS BACK I SHIELDED MY PROTECTION.
THEN THERE SHALL MY SPEAR STRIKE!
H-HELP ME, HAGEN..
HELP FOR MY HONOR!
HELP ME--FOR MY MOTHER WAS ALSO YOURS!
ONLY SIEGFRIED'S DEATH WILL PURGE YOUR HONOR, HALF-BROTHER.
BUT--WE SWORE BLOOD-BROTHERHOOD--!
THUS, HE WHO BROKE THAT BOND MUST PAY WITH HIS BLOOD!
AND HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HOW BOUNDLESS WILL BE YOUR MIGHT, IF YOU CAPTURE THE RING--WHICH HE WILL NEVER YIELD WHILE HE LIVES?
THE RING... YES.
WILL BRÜNNHILDE JOIN US IN THIS?
HIS DEATH IS ALL I ASK FOR!
DYING, SIEGFRIED ATONES FOR HIMSELF--AND FOR ALL OF YOU!
FOR MY DEAR SISTER'S SAKE, WE MUST CONCEAL HOW HE DIES...
WHEN WE GO HUNTING TOMORROW, SIEGFRIED WILL GALLOP AHEAD
WE WILL FIND HIM. SLAIN BY A WILD BOAR!
FATHER WOTAN--COME AT MY CALL!
SEND YOUR AWESOME HOST TO CARRY OUT MY VOW OF REVENGE!
HUSH, MY QUEEN...

... THE BRIDAL PROCESSION COMES...
THE DIE IS CAST!
SIEGFRIED'S FATE IS SEALED
MINE WILL BE BOTH RING AND HOARD OF GOLD -- AND MINE SHALL I HOLD IT!
FATHER -- ALBERICH -- HEAR YOUR SON!
BID THE NIBELUNG HOST OBEY YOU ONCE AGAIN --
-- THE RING'S DREAD LORD!

THOUGH THE SUN SENDS OUT ITS RAYS OF GLORY...
..HERE IN THE RHINE THERE IS ONLY DARKNESS...!
O SUN--SEND US THE HERO WHO SHALL GIVE BACK TO US OUR STOLEN GOLD!
RHINEGOLD--HOW BRIGHT ONCE WAS YOUR RADIANCE--
--GLORIOUS STAR OF THE WATERS!
HOLD, SISTERS!
HE COMES!
SIEGFRIED!
HO, DOWN THERE, FROLICKSOME MAIDS!
HAVE YOU SEEN THE SHAGGY-HIDED BEAST I WAS PURSUING?
WHAT WILL YOU GIVE US IF WE TELL YOU?
I HAVE CAUGHT NOTHING YET, SO ASK WHAT YOU WILL

THAT GOLDEN RING--
WE SEE HOW IT GLEAMS ON YOUR FINGER!
WILL YOU GIVE US THAT?
I WON IT BY FIGHTING A DRAGON
IF I GAVE IT TO YOU FOR A WILD BOAR, MY WIFE WOULD HAVE CAUSE TO SCOLD!
NO, THIS RING MUST REMAIN ON MY HAND
NOBLE SIEGFRIED--THE CURSE LAID ON THAT RING BY ITS MAKER DOOMS ITS WEARER TO DEATH!
YOU SHALL DIE TODAY-- UNLESS YOU GIVE THE RIVER ITS RING TO HIDE!
ENOUGH, YOU WOMEN FULL OF WILES!
IF I RESISTED YOU WHEN YOU FLATTERED-- I AM EVEN FIRMER NOW, WHEN YOU THREATEN!
OUR WARNING IS TRUE, SIEGFRIED!
FLEE! FLEE THE CURSE-- ENTWINED BY THE NORNS IN THE ROPE OF FATE!
GIVE US THE RING, WHILE YOU STILL HAVE LIFE AND LIMB!
THEY SAY IT IS A RING OF POWER-- THOUGH I MIGHT GIVE IT AWAY ONE DAY, FOR LOVE ALONE
AS FOR MY LIMBS AND MY LIFE..
LOOK!
THUS FREELY I FLING THEM ALL AWAY--

--BUT NEVER WILL I YIELD TO THREATS!
HAD IT NOT EVEN A FINGER'S WORTH, YOU WILL NEVER GAIN THIS RING YOU CRAVE!
FLY FROM THE MADMAN, SISTERS!
A GLORIOUS GIFT HE FLUNG AWAY--
BUT THE RING THAT DEALS HIM DOOM--THAT HE WILL NOT SURRENDER!
FAREWELL, SIEGFRIED!
ERE NIGHT FALLS, A PROUD WOMAN SHALL INHERIT YOUR TREASURE.
BY HER ALONE WILL OUR CRY BE HEARD!
WOMEN! THOSE WHO MISTRUST THEIR SMILES, THEY SEEK TO FRIGHTEN WITH EMPTY THREATS, OR WITH SCOLDING
STILL, IF I DID NOT HOLD GUTRUNE SO DEAR--
--ONE OF THOSE ALLURING MAIDENS WOULD HAVE BEEN MINE!
HOI-NO, SIEGFRIED--!

SO WE HAVE FOUND YOU AT LAST!
YOU HAVE HAD NO LUCK AT ALL, THEN?
HAD I BEEN MORE ALERT, I WOULD HAVE CAUGHT FOR YOU A BROOD OF THREE WILD WATER FOWL.
DOWN THERE ON THE RHINE, THEY TOLD ME THAT I WOULD BE SLAIN TODAY.
A SORRY CHASE-- WHERE THE LUCKLESS HUNTER FALLS A VICTIM TO HIS QUARRY!
AYE!
GODS, BUT I AM PLAGUED WITH THIRST!
SOMEONE GIVE SIEGFRIED A DRINKING-HORN!
IT IS RUMORED YOU CAN TELL THE MEANING OF WHAT THE BIRDS SING.
IS THAT TALE TRUE?
SINCE I HAVE HEARD WOMEN SINGING... THE BIRDS I HAVE QUITE FORGOTTEN.
I HAVE NOT LISTENED TO THEIR SONG FOR A VERY LONG TIME

AH! THAT TASTED GOOD!
YOU ARE QUIET TODAY, GUNTHER
HERE--DRINK! YOUR BLOOD-BROTHER OFFERS YOU THE HORN
A...PALE WINE YOU HAVE POURED.. BROTHER..
...WITH NO BLOOD BUT YOURS IN IT!
POOR, SAD GUNTHER
PERHAPS A TALE OF MY BOYHOOD WILL CHEER UP WHAT BRÜNNHILDE HAS MARRED.
OUT OF GREED, A SURLY OLD DWARF NAMED MIME REARED ME, SO I COULD SLAY A DRAGON FOR HIM WHEN I GREW UP
HE TAUGHT ME TO FORGE, AND FROM THE SPLINTERS OF MY FATHER'S BLADE I FASHIONED MY OWN SWORD, "NEEDFUL."
IN THE FOREST, I SLEW THE DRAGON FAFNER, WHO GUARDED THE NIBELUNG GOLD.
BUT WHEN I TOUCHED ITS BLOOD TO MY LIPS, I HEARD A BIRD SPEAKING OF THE TARNHELM--
--AND OF THE RING WHICH COULD MAKE ME LORD OF THE WORLD.
WHEN I HAD OBTAINED BOTH, THAT SAME BIRD WARNED ME THAT MIME WAS NOW BENT ON MURDERING ME, FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOLD.
THE DWARF TRIED TO POISON ME WITH A DEADLY BREW--

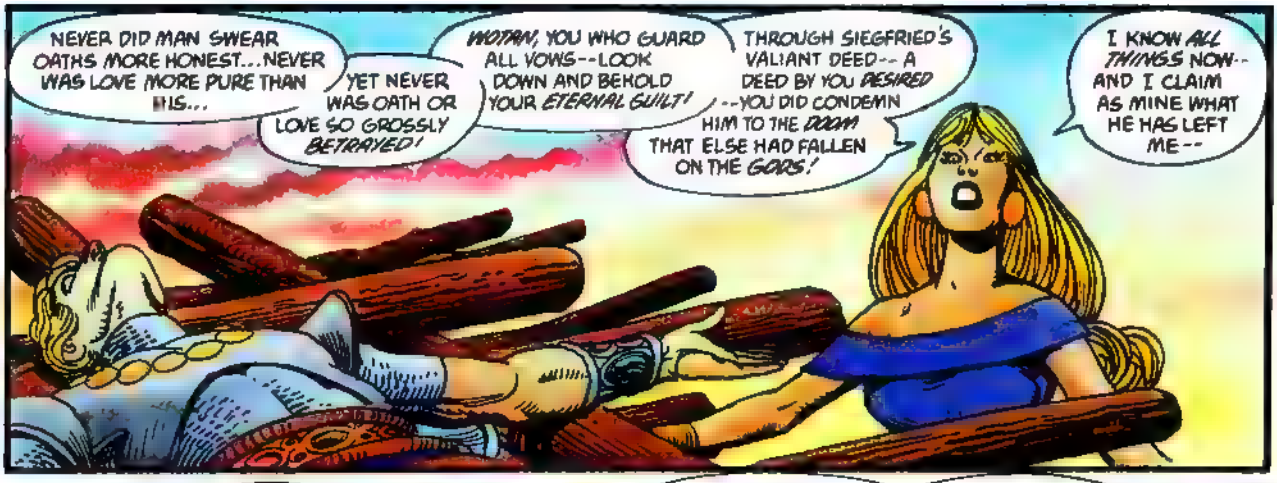
..BUT HIS WORDS BETRAYED HIS DEEDS, AND MY SWORD STRETCHED HIM OUT DEAD.
HAH! THE STEEL HE HAD NOT FORGED, OLD MIME SOON TASTED, EH?
HERE! A DRINK FROM MY HORN -- TO REMIND YOU OF THINGS LONG FORGOTTEN
DID THE BIRD TELL YOU ANYTHING ELSE?
AYE! IT SANG OF A MOST GLORIOUS BRIDE FOR ME--
--ONE WHO SLEPT AMID SKY-JUTTING ROCKS, HER CHAMBER RINGED BY FIRE!
I SOON PASSED THROUGH THOSE FLAMES--
--AND THERE I FOUND, SLEEPING, A WOMAN BOTH ARMORED AND BEAUTIFUL!
I WOKE HER WITH MY KISS -- AND THEN--
--THEN, THE BURNING, SWEET EMBRACE OF BRUNNHILDE'S RAPTUROUS ARMS!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
KAWWWW
KAWWW
KAWWW
DID YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THOSE RAVENS SAID, SIEGFRIED?

VENGEANCE!
THAT WAS THE WORD THEY SPOKE --
VENGEANCE!

HAGEN-- WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
I HAVE BUT BROUGHT DEATH, DEAR GUNTHER--
--TO A BREAKER OF OATHS!
BRUNNHILDE
MY..
.. BRIDE.
WAS THAT BRUNNHILDE I SAW GO DOWNWARD TO THE RHINE?
OH, WHEN WILL SIEGFRIED RETURN?
HAGEN? WHAT IS WRONG?
I SAW THE TORCHES, BUT-- WHAT ARE THEY CARRYING?
A WILD BOAR'S PREY THEY BRING TO YOU, GENTLE SISTER--
--YOUR HUSBAND SIEGFRIED--
--SLAIN!

SIEGFRIED..?
THEY HAVE SLAIN SIEGFRIED?
YOU! FALSE-HEARTED BROTHER--MURDERER OF MY HUSBAND!
NO! HAGEN IS THE ACCURSED "WILD BOAR" WHO DEALT THE HERO'S DEATH!
AND YOU REVILE ME FOR IT, NOW?
THEN--YES! I SLEW HIM WITH THE SPEAR BY WHICH HE FALSELY SWORE.
AND FOR MY PRIZE, I CLAIM--THE RING!
AWAY! YOU'LL NOT HAVE WHAT RIGHTLY FALLS TO ME, NIBELUNG-SON!
I WILL SHOW YOU HOW THE SON OF THE NIBELUNG DEMANDS HIS OWN!
THE RING IS MINE!
MINE!
SILENCE YOUR CLAMORING!
NOW, FOR HER VENGEANCE, SIEGFRIED'S TRUE WIFE COMES--
--THE WOMAN ALL HAVE BETRAYED!

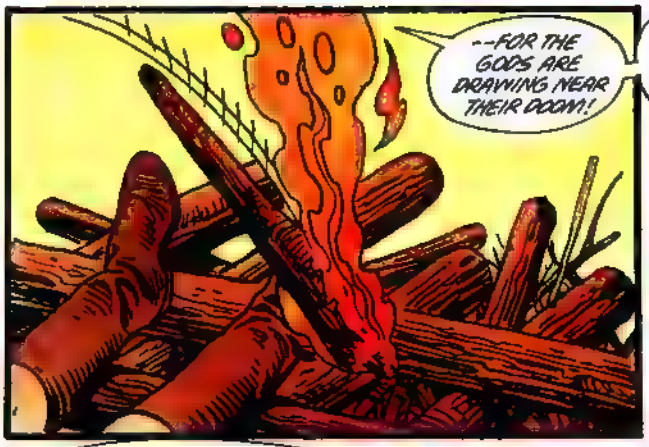
I HAVE HEARD YOU WHINING, AS CHILDREN WHINE WHEN MILK IS SPILT BY THEIR MOTHER ..
BUT A LAMENT FITTING FOR A HERO UNMATCHED -- THAT I HAVE NOT HEARD!
URGED BY YOU THEY SLEW HIM, BRÜNNHILDE!
CURSED THE HOUR THAT BROUGHT YOU HERE!
PEACE, YOU HAPLESS WRETCH. YOU WERE NEVER WIFE OF HIS!
TO ME WAS HIS BINDING OATH SWORN, BEFORE HE EVER BEHELD YOUR FACE!
VILE HAGEN! WHY DID YOU CALL FOR THE POISON THAT STOLE THAT WOMAN'S HUSBAND FOR ME?
I SEE NOW THAT BRÜNNHILDE WAS THE TRUE LOVE YOUR DAMNABLE DRINK MADE SIEGFRIED FORGET!
MY EYES ARE OPENED, AT LAST--
--IN SORROW
BEAR HIM TO THE SHORE
AND BRING HIS HORSE, THAT WITH ME HE MAY FOLLOW HIS LORD
FOR MY BODY LONGS TO HAVE PART IN SIEGFRIED'S GLORY...
... AND SHARE HIS HONOR IN DEATH!


NEVER DID MAN SWEAR OATHS MORE HONEST...NEVER WAS LOVE MORE PURE THAN HIS...
YET NEVER WAS OATH OR LOVE SO GROSSLY BETRAYED!
WOTAN, YOU WHO GUARD ALL VOWS--LOOK DOWN AND BEHOLD YOUR ETERNAL GUILT!
THROUGH SIEGFRIED'S VALIANT DEED--A DEED BY YOU DESIRED --YOU DID CONDEMN HIM TO THE DOOM THAT ELSE HAD FALLEN ON THE GODS!
I KNOW ALL THINGS NOW-- AND I CLAIM AS MINE WHAT HE HAS LEFT ME--

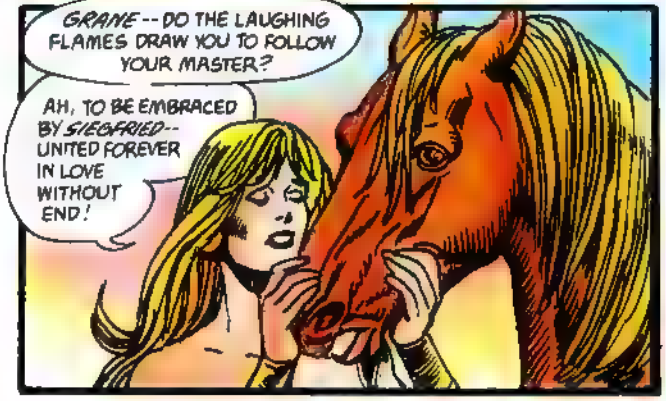
--THIS RING ACCURST!
THE RHINE-MAIDENS SHALL HAVE IT AT LAST, FROM OUT OF MY ASHES.

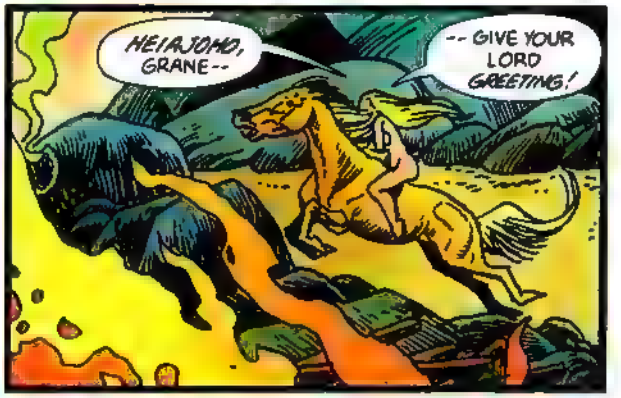
THE VERY FIRE WHICH CONSUMES ME CLEANSES THE RING OF ITS CURSE!
LET THEM GUARD FOREVER THE SHINING GOLD THAT WAS STOLEN FROM THEM!

YOU RAVENS--GO TELL YOUR LORD WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN AND HEARD BY THE RHINE!
BUT AS YOU GO, FLY BY BRÜNN-HILDE'S ROCK--
--AND BID LOSE FOLLOW YOU BACK HOME--


--FOR THE GODS ARE DRAWING NEAR THEIR DOOM!

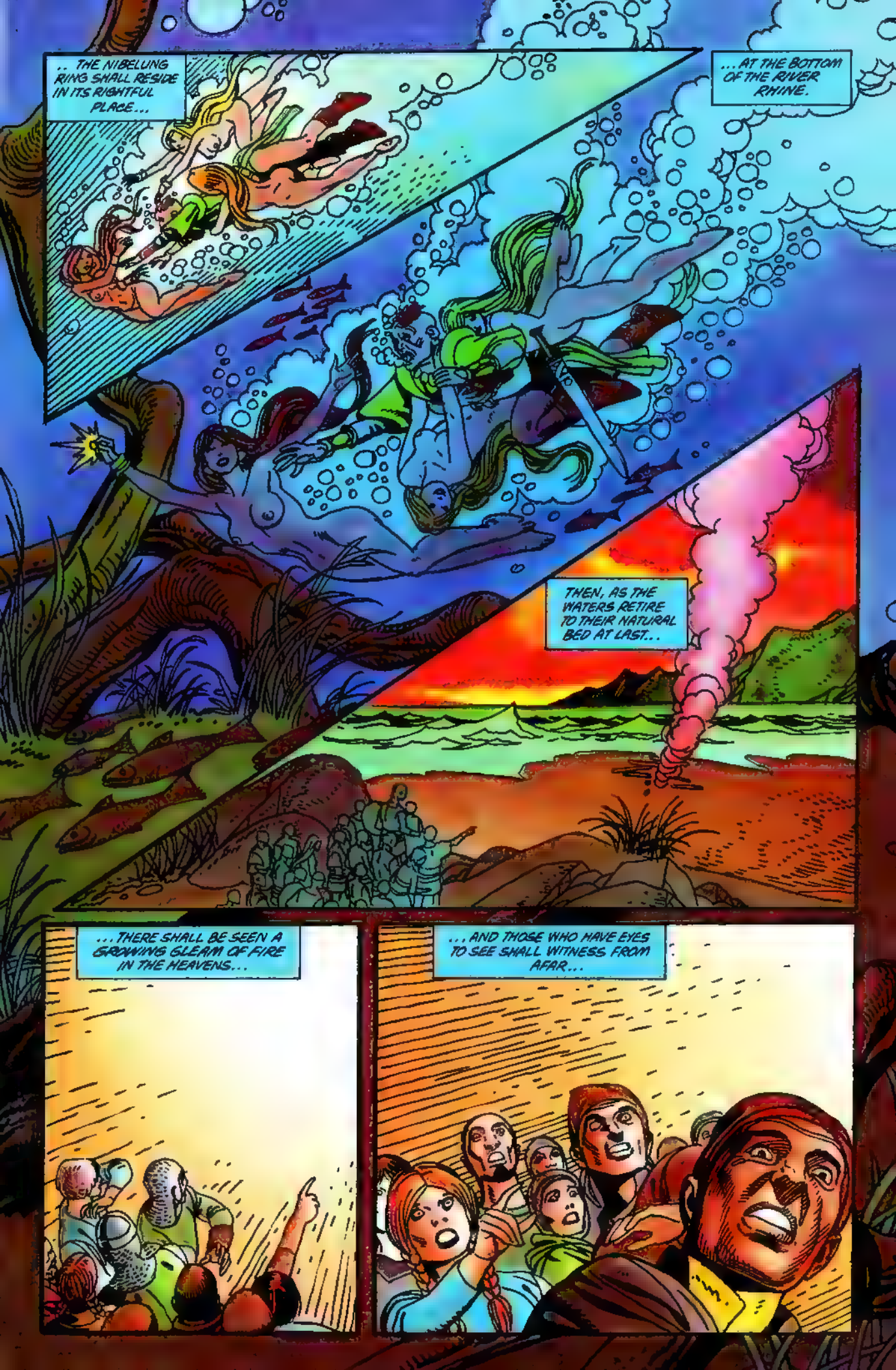
THUS IS THE FIREBRAND HURLED UPON VALHALLA'S GLITTERING WALLS, AS WELL!


GRANE--DO THE LAUGHING FLAMES DRAW YOU TO FOLLOW YOUR MASTER?
AH, TO BE EMBRACED BY SIEGFRIED--UNITED FOREVER IN LOVE WITHOUT END!


HEIAJOHO, GRANE--
--GIVE YOUR LORD GREETING!

SIEGFRIED!
SIEGFRIED, DO YOU SEE?
BRUNNHILDE GREETS YOU--
--YOUR BRIDE!
ERDA, MEN CALL ME.
A SEERESS, WISE IN MAGIC.
I SING THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS...
...AYE, AND I DO SING THEIR END.
THE BIRTHS OF GODS AND MEN... AND THEIR TWILIGHT DOOM, WHEN FLAMES SHALL

THEN SHALL THE GREAT RIVER OVERFLOW ITS BANKS..
...AND THE FLOOD ROLL UP OVER THE FIRE.
THERE, TOO, SHALL THE DAUGHTERS OF THE RHINE APPEAR...
...AT THE PLACE WHERE THE SURGING WAVES HAVE SWALLOWED UP BOTH FIRE...
...AND RING.
NO!
BACK FROM THE RING!
THE RING IS MINE!
FROM THAT DAY TILL TIME'S DISTANT END...


.. THE NIBELUNG RING SHALL RESIDE IN ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE...
...AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER RHINE.
THEN, AS THE WATERS RETIRE TO THEIR NATURAL BED AT LAST..
...THERE SHALL BE SEEN A GROWING GLEAM OF FIRE IN THE HEAVENS...
...AND THOSE WHO HAVE EYES TO SEE SHALL WITNESS FROM AFAR...

... THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS.
FIN

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... AND A SHAPELESS MASS TOOK UNTO ITSELF FIRST FORM...

...THEN LIFE.

YMIR.

FROM HIM, AND FROM THE LIVING VOID AURGELMIR, WERE FORMED THE FROST GIANTS...

...THEN BORR, THE FIRST OF THE GODS.

WHOEVER OWNS--THIS HEARTH--

--HERE-- I MUST--

--REST

HUNDING?